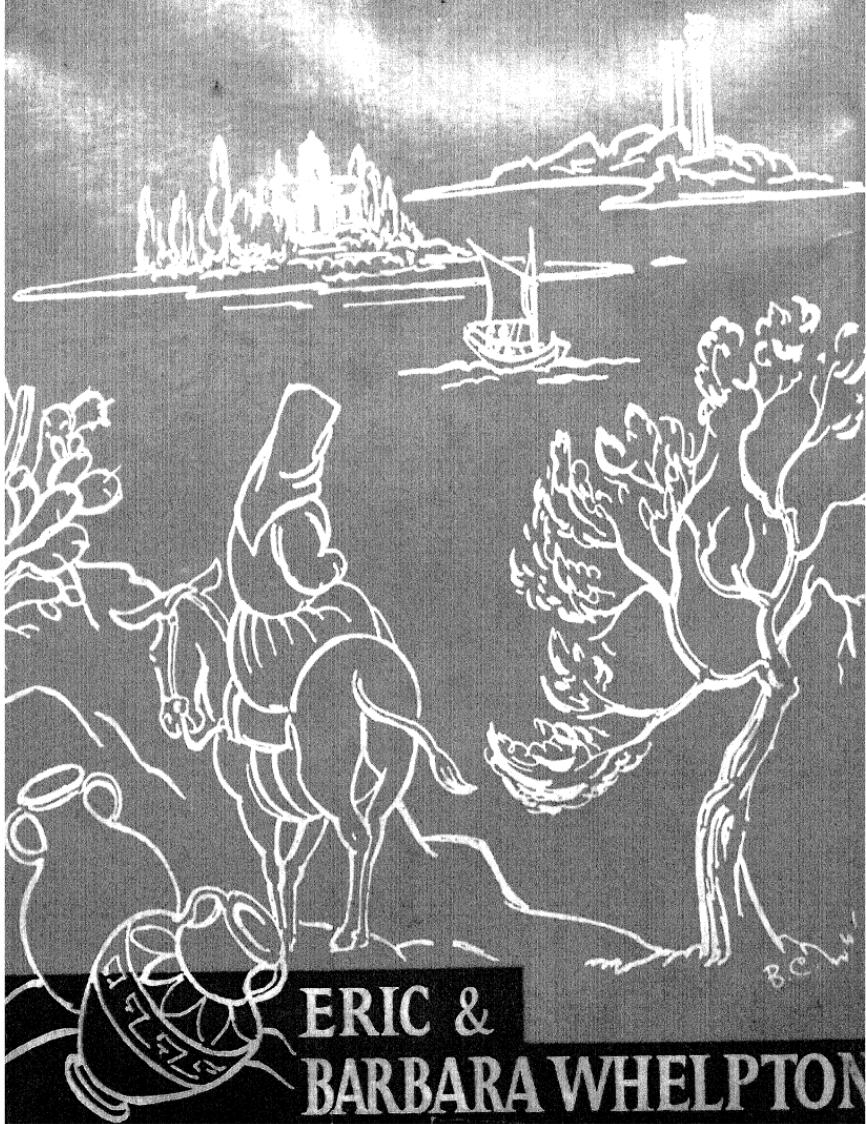


GREECE AND THE ISLANDS



ERIC &
BARBARA WHELPTON

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GREECE AND THE ISLANDS

Eric and Barbara Whelpton

GREECE HAS BECOME IN RECENT YEARS a favorite meeting-place of world travellers. For the authors of this delightful book, it is a country they know and love. Ideally suited to the task of depicting Greece in all its beauty and grandeur—for Barbara Whelpton is a painter and art critic and Eric Whelpton's interests are history and gastronomy—they give us a comprehensive and lively tour of the cities and countryside, and the islands.

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N.Y., Roy Publishers (1961)
176p. illus. \$4.00

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GREECE AND THE ISLANDS

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GREECE
AND
THE ISLANDS

by
ERIC and BARBARA WHELPTON

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NEW YORK
ROY PUBLISHERS, INC

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Library of Congress Catalog card number 62-15486

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

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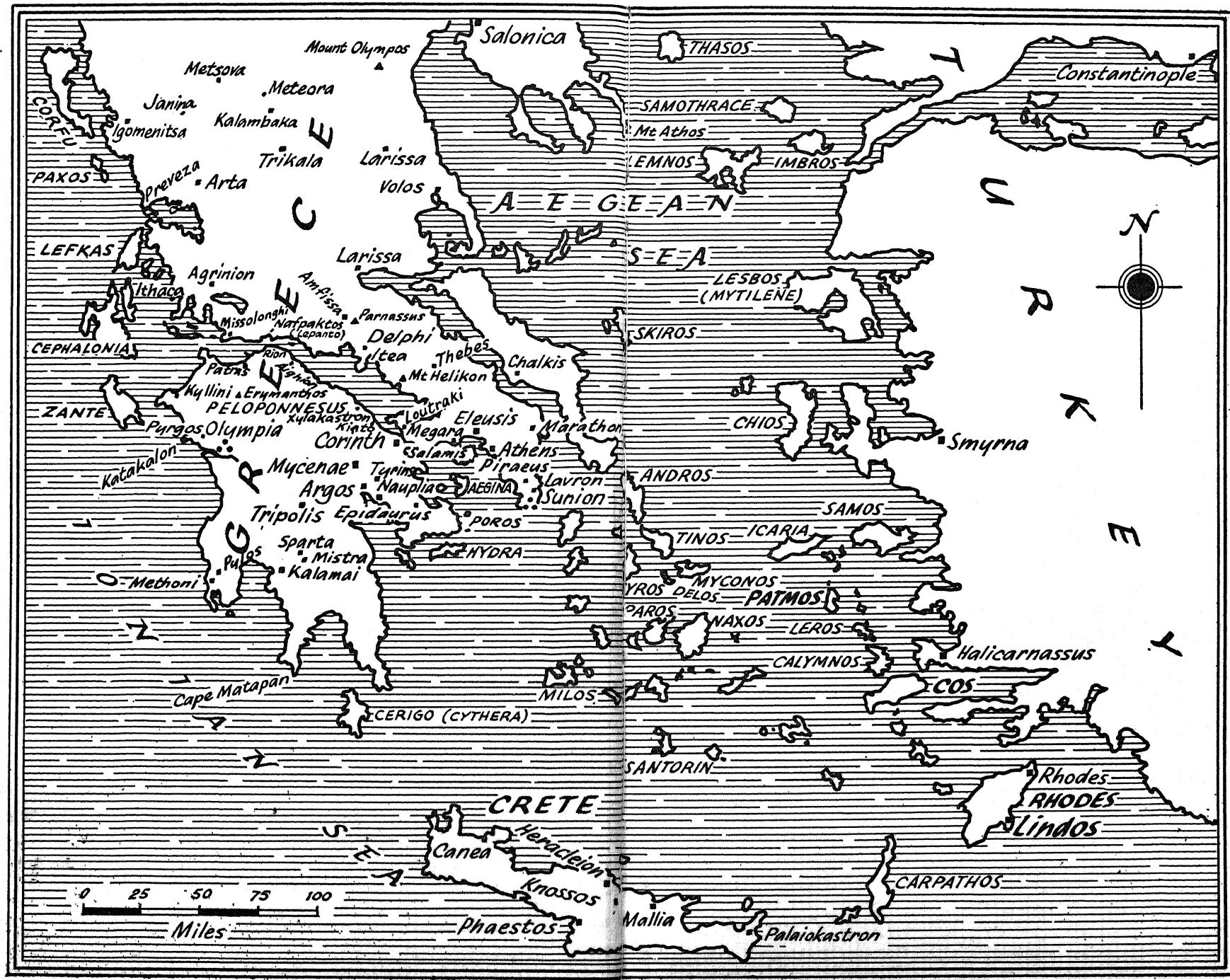
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors wish to thank the Greek Tourist Office, London, for providing the illustrations.



CHAPTER ONE

ARRIVAL IN ATHENS

SINCE first impressions tend to influence one's appreciation of a country, it is just as well to select the method of transport with due consideration. For instance, the right way to arrive in Venice is by sea, or by gondola from Mestre, for trains or cars make their entry into this most beautiful of cities in a district which has been really spoilt by materialistic-minded administrators in the nineteenth century. On the other hand, liners pass slowly through a channel between two lidos, and then suddenly a wonderful spectacle opens up before the traveller's eyes: the tall Campanile of St. Mark's Square, the snowy white Palace of the Doges, the pencil steeple of San Giorgio on its islet, the bright golden ball on the summit of the Dogana, the Dome of the Salute. On a sunny day, preferably in the late afternoon or the early morning, there is a riot of light, of changing colour, and imaginative architecture.

Now the approach to Athens needs perhaps even more discernment, for if the works of man add little to the beauty of the scene, the first impact of the Bay is one of the greatest experiences of a lifetime, but it must be seen from the sea, or from the coastal road that passes Glifadha and Phaleron. So my choice would be to arrive by boat or by plane, and my preference would be to sail in from the east catching sight perhaps of the marble columns of the temple of Poseidon on Cape Sunion, for this promontory lunges right out into the blue Aegean, with a promise of still greater wonders to come. In the background, the violet grey Pentelikon fills the skyline, for it is nearly four thousand feet high, and seen from this angle, it just tops Mount Hymettus, whose bare slopes are covered with the scented flowers that produce such good honey. Below and much nearer, the grey coast is dotted with white villas half buried among sombre trees, for Athens, alas, is spreading as fast as any other capital and perhaps even faster, but the town planning authorities are usually vigilant.

To the left of the slowly steaming ship, the island of

Aegina's outline is blurred by a slight mist that adds to the magic of the scene. In fact, the clear white light lends enchantment to a landscape that looks as if it had been planned by the Great Architect of the Universe to be the setting of the noblest and most intelligent of nations. If the hills and the coastal features are usually distinct, the haze of the sea evokes all sorts of visions of the past, of the ships that ventured out into the unknown without charts, without compasses to wander through the Mediterranean in the face of frightful dangers. Now according to Plutarch, it was Theseus who selected the site of Athens to be the capital of Attica, and it was he who led the people to make their home at the foot of the Acropolis on which he built the first Senate House and Council Chamber. Nevertheless, the Delphic Oracle whom he consulted, foretold that the city's prosperity and survival could only be found on the water. This prophecy, as we know, proved to be absolutely true, for more than once Athens was saved by her fleet, and she has risen again like the Phoenix, after the most overwhelming threats of destruction.

So in the present day, the mainstay of Greek economy is the merchant navy, based at Piraeus which is one of the largest ports of the Mediterranean. It was also the harbour of ancient Athens, but now there are no outward remains of the glorious past but only the signs of a very active present. As ships glide nearer to their destination, a tangled mass of rigging, derricks, and masts reveals the dock area, and behind it, the smoke of the chimneys of factories hangs like a pall over Piraeus and the eastern suburbs of Athens.

The harbour is crammed with shipping from all parts of the world, but in particular from Egypt, Turkey, and Israel, as well as from the great maritime countries like Britain, Germany and the United States.

Before landing, the new arrival is made to buy a ticket for the transport of his luggage, but only too often the porters extract a sizeable tip from the tongue-tied foreigner. The country Greeks are singularly hospitable, generous and ungrasping, but in Piraeus, and in the centre of Athens, the taxi drivers tend to try out the well-worn trick of forgetting to put down their flags, and of asking for twice the recognized fare, or even more if they can get it.

For those who are lightly loaded, the Larissa and the Pelo-

ponnesus stations are near at hand. The first is the terminus for trains going to northern Greece, the second for the south side of the Corinth Canal and to all accessible parts of the Peloponnesus. This mountainous peninsula was known as the Morea in the Middle Ages, but the name is still used by some writers.

To go cheaply to Athens, there is the underground railway to Omonias Square, one of the hubs of the city, but about a mile away from the hotels of Constitution Square, which is called Plateia Syntagmatos in Greek, but will answer to its cosmopolitan name. As a rule, I have found it cheaper, quicker, and more practical to charter a taxi from the docks, after finding out the exact amount of the usual tariff, a tariff which grows with each successive year, so I will refrain from quoting a figure which may soon be out of date. If the approach by sea is a dream, the drive into the centre from Piraeus is disappointing, for the road passes through a hideous industrial district whose ugliness is relieved by an occasional glimpse of the marble columns of the Parthenon high up on its hill. At night, this spectacle can be enchanting, for the Acropolis is floodlit, and rises like a phantom out of the darkness.

In 1933, there were still fields and meadows in the area that lies between Piraeus and Athens, but ten years previously the two cities were separated by three or four miles of open country. This rapid increase in size is due largely to the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey in 1923 after a disastrous war. The refugees came for the most part from Asia Minor and the Turkish islands, but others were ejected from the remote shores of the Black Sea, where they had lived for centuries in places like Trebizond. Until then, there had still been a number of Turks in Greece particularly in the northern provinces which had only been liberated in 1912, and in Crete, that had been a sort of Mandated Territory for nearly twenty years. Well over a million newcomers had to be accommodated in the mid-nineteen-twenties, and this at a time when there were no more than six million inhabitants in the country. Some authorities put the figure of immigrants at one and a half million, which was precisely 25 per cent. of the population. Somehow or another these unfortunates were assimilated, but in spite of this, there has

also been a steady flow of countrymen coming to the capital in search of work. Then, more recently, during the Civil War that broke out in 1948, 700,000 refugees arrived from the north, and though most of them were eventually repatriated, a certain number remained.

Later on, when Nasser began to pursue a nationalistic policy, still more Greeks arrived from Egypt, and many of these had been away from their fatherland for several generations. Of those who had come from Turkey, the great majority were descended from the Greek settlements of Homeric times, and most of them had never even visited the land where they were taking refuge. Their dialects, their customs and the traditions were very different, but like all Greeks they were intensely proud of their race, and the fact that they were of the same religion facilitated matters greatly.

So Athens has spread, and her streets are usually incredibly crowded, even for the Mediterranean region where the people spend most of their lives out of doors.

To arrive in Greece by train from the north can also be a memorable experience because the scenery between Salonica (Thessaloniki) and Athens is singularly beautiful, and so it is well worth doing this part of the journey by day, for the trains have been speeded up, the rolling stock has been improved, and there is an opportunity of meeting the people of the country who are friendly, helpful and entertaining. The entry into the capital, however, is not impressive, for the railway stations are both of them situated in particularly featureless quarters.

I have often come to Athens by air, approaching it from every point of the compass, but the most dramatic route assuredly is from Rome. Now that planes fly so high, the bleak, bare mountains of southern Italy do not stand out in high relief, and so the impact of the sheer beauty of Greece is all the greater. Shortly after crossing the coast of Calabria, where the twin lagoons of Taranto are easily discernible, the white peaks of Albania and Epirus float like small clouds in a dazzlingly blue sky. When the outlines of these rugged mountains grow clearer, their lower slopes reveal a subtle gradation of tints, ranging from grey to deep violet or mauve.

Soon, the plane soars over the Ionian archipelago, and islands and places with enchanted names appear to rise like

whales out of the sea, evoking the strange mysteries and romance of the past: Leucadia, where Sappho the poetess threw herself over the side of a cliff because of unrequited love, just to the south of the Bay of Actium, that witnessed the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra which brought such tragedy. The rocky island of Ithaca, once ruled by Ulysses, lies to the right, and to the left lies Missolonghi where Byron died uselessly and in misery. As we glide over the Gulf of Patras, and its huge continuation the Gulf of Corinth, the tiers of brown, grey and violet mountains succeed each other on either side—usually their peaks are flecked with snow in summer, in the winter and in the early spring—their slopes gleam with a blinding and frosty whiteness. How chill and bare are these heights, whose harsh climate made the Greeks so tough and courageous that their hundreds would face thousands and conquer! And yet the blandness of the Attic plain bred artists, poets and philosophers, and men as brave as the austere Spartans with whom they fought.

Looking northwards, the huge mass of Parnassus towers up above the sombre olive groves of Amphissa, and creates once more the illusion of journeying into a remote and poetic past. Corinth stood and still stands on the shore to the south-west, just as the canal that gashes the narrow isthmus can be seen, like a jet black stripe against the silvery grey soil. These endless ranges of mountains and this narrow tongue of land that once divided the two seas on which the Hellenes sailed, help to explain the history of the Greeks and their character. On it stood a pillar of stone, carved on one side with the inscription:

“Here is not the Peloponnese but Ionia.”

And on the western face:

“Here is the Peloponnese, but not Ionia.”

It was in a land thus split up by sea and mountains, that small communities could develop safely and freely into city states, that could repel the hosts of the Medes and Persians. The end came only when they fought against each other.

Even when the plane is swiftly losing height, the Bay of Athens may seem as tenuous and as full of brilliance as a water colour by an artist of great genius. Islands are scattered heedlessly on a sea bounded to the south-west by the much indented coast of Argolis, a name that draws me like a magnet merely by its charm. To the north the wide arc of the Saronic Gulf

curves gracefully round to the Cape of Sunion. On either side, hills of wondrous pattern are outlined against the sky harmoniously but without monotony.

The airfield at Hellenikon is pleasantly situated within a few hundred yards of the sea, but the procedure of disembarking from the aircraft and waiting for the city-bound bus is just as tedious as anywhere else. The inevitable loud speaker blares incessantly, but here there is a feeling of being half-way East. The departing planes are going to Cairo, Baghdad or Istanbul on their next lap, those that arrive bring with them passengers from all parts of the Orient as well as from Western Europe.

I may be old-fashioned, but I am still amazed at the swift transit from one country to another provided by aircraft, and then each plane is a microcosm of a nation and its way of life. Within a few minutes of reading *The Times* comfortably and consuming a very English tea brought by a still more British air-hostess, one is plunged suddenly into the busy surge of Greek life, and the cosmopolitan framework of the airport accentuates this Greek atmosphere, in this land of individualists.

On leaving the airport, the impact is a different one. The road follows the coast for two miles, affording wonderful views of the sea, of the Islands of Salamis and Aegina, with the intervening stretch of clear smooth water, and the long line of the mountains and coast of Argolis reaching out to a distant horizon. On the edge of the shore are strung out the small cafés, lidos and roadhouses found on the outskirts of any Mediterranean resort, though they seem to lack the atmosphere of gaiety that is only to be found in such places in France. Apart from the ancient monuments and the natural beauty of the landscape, the chief attraction of Greece is the Greeks, who must be loved for their qualities sufficiently to overlook their defects. Yet perhaps, and in Athens most of all, there is the most invigorating air in the world. It stimulates thought and energy, and is even a substitute for food, for in this climate meals seem scarcely necessary and one is never tortured by the gnawing hunger that assails one in northern countries. So perhaps, in these circumstances, philosophy comes easily, but anger and anxiety too, for there is a law of compensation. Except for a few monuments of

importance the modern architecture of Athens is featureless and unimaginative. Though I have driven many times along the broad double-tracked motorway that leads from Phaleron on the coast to the centre, the only buildings that have made any impression on my mind have been excruciatingly ugly ones. Tall blocks of flats or offices screen off the Acropolis, at points from which it could be seen in all its splendour a few years ago. Fortunately this excess of industrialization comes to an end and is redeemed by an area of better taste, revealed first of all by the sixteen tall and massive columns of the Olympeion, the ruins of the largest temple ever erected in honour of Zeus, for it was nearly four hundred feet in length and one hundred and thirty-five feet in breadth. Begun in the sixth century before Christ it was completed seven hundred years later by the Emperor Hadrian, for the celebration of the feast to the gods of Olympus from which it takes its name. The whole was surrounded by a "forest of statues" which were doubtless of very restricted artistic value since they were carved by Roman artists.

Now these ruins have the patina and dignity of age, and they make a pleasant feature in these gardens which are open to the coolness of the sea breezes in the heat of summer.

Next to the Olympeion is an arch to Hadrian, and a little further on, the broad Amalia Avenue skirts the lush greenness of the Public Gardens and the Palace Gardens before coming to the Plateia Syntagmatos, the Constitution Square, the cosmopolitan hub of Athens, and one that is full of movement and colour at all times of the day and night. In the darkness, the illuminated signs of the airline companies and travel bureaux shine brightly next to café terraces and hotels. Newly arrived tourists wander about slightly dazed and awed by their unfamiliar surroundings. Every few yards, kiosks display newspapers and magazines in a score of languages next to piles of paper-backs in English, French, or German. Shoeblacks line the pavements waiting for customers, to polish their shoes to an astonishing brightness. Outside the Ionic colonnade of the former Royal Palace, smart Evzones march up and down on sentry-go, whirling their short ballet skirts as they wheel in front of the tomb of the unknown soldier. Built by the first (Bavarian) King of Greece, it now houses the national Parliament, for the present monarchs have a

smaller residence, sited less conspicuously at the back of the Royal Gardens.

In a sense, Constitution Square must represent Athens to the tens of thousands of visitors who only come here for a few days, for wherever they may stay, they are bound to make use of its amenities very frequently, and for those who cannot speak modern Greek, it is a most practical point of departure for shopping or sightseeing. Indeed from one point of this gracious square there is a charming prospect of the Acropolis which is not so very far away. Then another very pleasing feature that often breaks the monotony of the urban scene, is the green hill of Lycabettus, on the crest of which was built the little Chapel of St. George. Now this eminence can be reached either on foot or by road. The trip is worth making because of the superb panorama of the city and of the surrounding countryside from this point which is nearly a thousand feet above the level of the sea. One can, of course, enjoy the wonderful Attic landscape from many other places, but usually from a different angle and at different times of the day, the harmony of light, colour on mountains, islands, sea and city changes and varies in subtlety.

Now that Athens has spread up the slopes of the vast amphitheatre of the hills that surround it, the wealthy tend to live in these suburbs where the air is cooler and this scenery adds delight to existence. Nevertheless, few people commute as far as in the United States, Great Britain or France, though in the summertime, everyone who can afford it, goes out to the beaches that stretch from Phaleron to Sunion, and even to the shores that face the Island of Euboea. In these circumstances, it is not surprising that the number of really fashionable cafés and bars in Athens is limited, and most of these are frequented by foreigners.

In many ways, it is not difficult to find one's way in this city, for large scale maps are distributed gratis in every hotel and tourist office. Points of vantage are fairly obvious and public transport tends to converge on Omonias Square and Constitution Square, the two centres which are linked together by the Churchill Stadiou, and the Venizelou Panepistimiou, two broad streets unmistakably smarter than the rest, but each has its individuality, and some obvious landmarks. In the Stadiou, there are more shops, and some very

smart ones too; the Venizelou has hotels, beginning with the large and very smart King's Palace Hotel and going on to establishments of a lower category. On the same side, the Academy, the University, and the National Library, are all built in the Classical style of nineteenth-century Munich and make a pleasant break in the straight line of buildings, for broad steps lead up to colonnaded façades which are set back from the street. Opposite, the short broad Korai is more or less the boundary of the cosmopolitan quarter, though it contains at least two good cafés and an excellent restaurant called the Athinon.

Beyond this street, begins the more popular Athens of the Greeks, with Omonias Square half a mile further on as its centre. The houses are for the most part sombre and grey in this quarter, but concrete blocks of modern flats and hotels are springing up on all sides. The square itself and its immediate vicinity are always seething with people, for the most part of the middle and lower-middle classes. They rush to their jobs, they stroll along in ardent conversation, they shop at one or other of the chain stores, or look at the newspapers displayed on one of the innumerable kiosks, which sell also an incredible variety of things. In some you can get razor blades, tobacco, sweets or drinks. Others specialize in souvenirs and paper-back books in different languages, though most of them must be bought by the inhabitants. The numerous cafés have this in common that for the most part they do not serve "French coffee" but only the diminutive cups of Greek coffee of the kind that you will get in all parts of the Near East. *Ouzo*, the local aperitif is akin to the *pastis* of Marseilles, the *rakki* of Turkey, the *anis* of North Africa, and to a lesser extent *absinthe*, but it does not contain wormwood, and so it is a really refreshing pick-me-up, though it is just as well not to become addicted to it. To get a large cup of coffee you must ask for French coffee, though in this quarter it will be made with powder and not from beans. At intervals, there are Espressos that brew their beverage with Italian machines, and serve snacks. The latest development are snack bars called *pic-nics*. In this land most people are contented with one dish, or even less. In the towns and nearly everywhere in the country you can find the really excellent yoghurt, which is so good that I have often made a meal from a large bowl, with

a glass of the white *retzina*, the local wine flavoured with resin. It is really thirst quenching and a taste worth acquiring, though the flavour is rather a strange one. The best alternative is a rosé, called *Kokinella*, which is light, refreshing and free from acidity. The red wines of Attica are apt to be sour, so, when in doubt, it is best to order the *Domestika* in bottle, which comes from the Peloponnese, where the French crusaders developed the vineyards in the Middle Ages. The best that can be said of the local brandy is that it is cheap and very potent.

To be quite frank, gastronomy is not particularly good in Greece, save for the lamb, which is as a rule of the best quality, served either roasted, or grilled on a skewer, when it is called *suvlakia* in Greek countries, and *kebab* in Turkey and North Africa. The chicken, like most of the poultry of the Mediterranean, cannot be compared with the Surrey fowl, the *poulard* of France, or the Maryland chicken of the States.

On the other hand, shellfish such as lobsters and prawns are usually freshly caught and excellent in flavour, though seldom served with any other sauce than mayonnaise or oil, lemon juice and herbs, but really fresh fish does not need to be cooked in an elaborate manner. The same rule of course applies to the small octopus which are delicious if they are fried in oil or butter. The cheeses are sound, but lacking in variety, and the fruit is the same as anywhere else in the Mediterranean zone, except for the medlars which are delicious, though here they are not matured as in northern lands.

In many ways the best part of the meals both in Greece, Turkey and other countries of the Middle East, is the *mezze*, a kind of light *hors d'œuvre*, consisting usually of peeled shrimps, pistachio nuts, aubergine whipped with oil, different kinds of fish roe treated in the same way, and a sort of pink caviar which I can really recommend. In the region of Constitution Square, the restaurants produce menus printed in English or French, and the most expensive of these places serve dishes prepared in the French or Italian manner. Others have adapted the Greek cuisine to the cosmopolitan taste and have done so quite successfully.

In the *tavernas* which are more essentially Greek, the problem of ordering a meal is solved quite simply by the fact that the food is displayed on counters and cooked in the

presence of the customers who can point out what they want.

There are taverns of all sorts in most parts of the capital, but those of particular interest to the visitor are to be found in the Plaka, the former Turkish quarter which lies immediately to the north of the Acropolis, and in Piraeus. The most amusing of the former do not begin to wake up until at least half past ten at night, and the floor shows of Greek folk dancing are not at their liveliest until much later. In one or two of these joints, the guests are regaled with traditional Turkish music called *bouzouki* which has recently become fashionable. This name is taken from the stringed instrument used to accompany the haunting ballads, whose melancholy and varied tunes help to explain the words of the theme.

The Greek folk dancing is full of movement and joy, but to me it is an experience, rather than a habit to acquire, whereas I can return to *bouzouki* and the Rumanian and gipsy music with greater pleasure, but these too can be found in both Athens and Piraeus. This last place can easily be reached at night by bus, or by the underground railway from Omonias Square, but in this case the *tavernas* are so numerous that the problem is which to select. Both here and in the Plaka, the fashion varies, and it is almost useless to give a list of these places which quickly become spoilt by popularity, and are just as quickly knocked out by rivals who have to make the grade.

However, the hotels here have a system which is of great use to the timorous visitor who has to find his feet. Guests who are *en pension* can have tickets to different restaurants where they can have an excellent meal without extra payment. In the region of Constitution Square there are five or six sound places that are reliable and present no problems of language, gastronomy or location. These are Costi's in the Korai, Vassili's in the Jan Smuts, Floca's in Venizelos Avenue, and the less expensive Kalamia at No. 5 Stadiou which has a shady garden, and Averof which is almost next door at No. 14.

In the summer I can recommend a fish restaurant called the Zervas at Glifadha about nine miles from the city by car or bus, and situated near the water's edge. Restaurants continue to spring up overnight like mushrooms on the recently built coast road that links up Glifadha with Sunion and passes innumerable little beaches and bays.

CHAPTER TWO

SEEING THE CAPITAL

The Acropolis—The Byzantine Churches— The Museums—Easter in Athens

SINCE most hotels in Athens are within easy reach of the Acropolis, it is really quite practical to start off in the cool of the morning and to go on foot at a time when the sun has not drenched the colour out of the landscape. Along the wall of the old Royal Palace, in the Leoforos Vassilis Sofia, and almost opposite the northern façade of the Hotel Grande Bretagne, there is a line of shops loaded with the most magnificent flowers: roses, arum lilies, lilies, gladioli, all of them blossoming at times when they cannot be seen in the northern countries, and larger by far than elsewhere. In most of the squares in Athens there are similar displays, for the Greeks delight in flowers, and the peasants and countryfolk in most parts love to grow them in their gardens.

Starting from Constitution Square, a number of routes lead to the Acropolis, but all of them are negotiable with a map in hand. So, for instance, by walking down Ermou, otherwise Hermes Street, a little deviation by taking the third turning on the left, leads to the Cathedral which is modern and of slight architectural interest, for it is characteristic of the style of the mid-nineteenth century. Next to it, the Metropolis is a tiny little church built in the eighth century, possibly by the Empress Irene, at a time when Athens was a shrunken small town no larger than a big village. It contains a stone which was considered by some to be part of the throne on which Jesus sat when He turned the water into wine at Cana.

The façade of the Metropolis is adorned with a frieze which was originally a calendar of the ancient Greek festivals, with processions, dances, athletic events and the celebration of the grape harvest. Then on the same wall can be seen the coat of arms of the chronicler Villehardouin, the friend of St. Louis,

whose descendants were Princes of Achaia in the Pelopon-
nese for many years.

The interior is bare, but one becomes conscious of the size of this little church whose dome is less than forty feet high, and whose façade is only twenty-four feet across. Its charm lies in the mellow red brick of the construction, the warm golden patina of the marble fragments stuck to the façade.

Our first approach to the Parthenon many years ago was one of the greatest experiences of our lives, though it was surpassed in our last visit, perhaps because of the joyous anticipation of what we were to see. Arriving on foot, and passing through uneven little streets of Turkish houses and small *tavernas*, it is possible to avoid the rush of tourists who arrive by road so as not to have to walk up the lower part of the slope. We may have been lucky but we have always found this little quarter practically empty and even a shade forlorn in the sunshine of the early morning. After passing first of all through the Square of the Roman Agora, which was used as a market and town centre under the empire, you come upon the well preserved Tower of the Winds. Externally it seems untouched by the hand of time, but the curious mechanism for which it was constructed has of course disappeared. Originally the interior contained a kind of clock worked by the water flowing down from the Spring of Clepsidra on the Acropolis. The time was shown on dials, and the direction of the wind by a bronze statue of a triton on the summit. Each of the eight faces was decorated with bas-reliefs symbolizing the different winds. Thus the Zephyr was represented by a handsome boy scattering blossom from his garments, and the North Wind is a scowling old man shivering in the folds of an ample cloak. Further west, on the far side of the extension of Ermou, the Cemetery of Ceramics was the burial place of the great, like the Pantheon in Paris or Westminster Abbey. Since it is being skilfully excavated by the Americans, this picturesque graveyard with its crumbling walls, broken tombs and guardian cypresses, should have an increasing interest as fresh discoveries are made. One day perhaps, the tombs of the great men of the past, such as Pericles, will be opened up, though one cannot expect to find treasures like those of Mycenae, Troy or Knossos.

Just beyond the Roman Agora, stretched the Agora of the



KEY

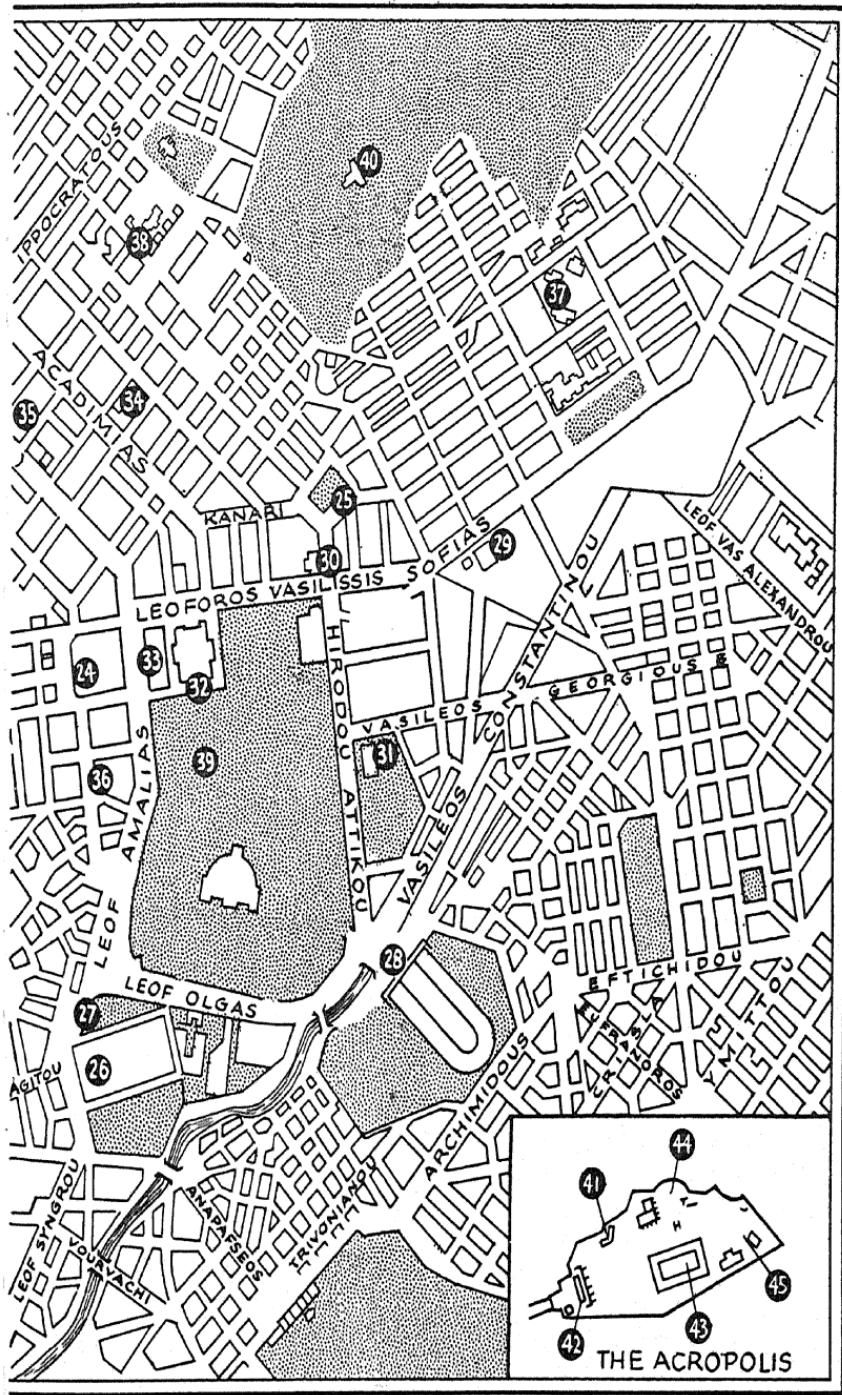
1. Peloponnesus Railway
2. Omonias
3. Klafthmonos
4. Odeon of Herodes
 Atticus
5. Portico of Eumenes
6. Theatre of Dionysos
7. Areopagus
8. Pnyx
9. Monument of
 Philopappus
10. Monument of Lysicrates
11. Theseum
12. Agora of Athens
13. Portico of Attalus
14. Tower of the Winds
15. Roman Agora
16. Library of Hadrian
17. Ceramicus
18. Small Metropolis and
 Cathedral
19. Kapnikarea Church
20. Aghii Theodori
21. University of Athens
22. National Library
23. Royal Theatre

KEY

- 24. Syntagmatos
(Constitution Square)
- 25. Kolonaki
- 26. Olympeion
- 27. Hadrian's Arch
- 28. Stadium
- 29. Byzantine Museum
- 30. Benaki Museum
- 31. Royal Palace
- 32. Old Palace (Parliament)
- 33. Tomb of the Unknown
 Soldier
- 34. National Tourist
 Organization
- 35. Academy of Athens
- 36. Tourist Information
 Office
- 37. British School
- 38. French School
- 39. National Garden
- 40. Lycabettus

INSET

- 41. Acropolis
- 42. Propylaea
- 43. Parthenon
- 44. Erechtheum
- 45. Acropolis Museum



Greeks, the meeting place of Athens where Socrates used to stop the passersby to engage them in conversation, and to the west of it stands the Theseum, the most complete of all Greek temples and taking its name from the friezes and sculptures that it once contained, depicting the exploits of Theseus. It was in fact dedicated to the worship of Hephaistos, the Vulcan of the Romans, because there were forges in this quarter, and there still are blacksmiths at work in the present day in the market of the Plaka.

Above, rises a rocky hill called the Areopagus where serious crimes were tried by a court of Athenian elders, and it is suggested that it was here that the apostle Paul delivered his speech to the men of Athens which is to be found in the Acts of the Apostles. At the base of this mount, some rocks are pointed out as being the shrine of the Furies, who were so feared that they were referred to as the Euminides or well-wishers.

Now the history of the Acropolis is in a sense the history of the Athens of the Ancients, which embodied the best of the Greek culture that has influenced the world for so many centuries. If Theseus never existed, it is nevertheless probable that some king like him did build a city and temples on the top of this hill which had been fortified and inhabited by many other races previously. So on the edge of the Acropolis we can still see remnants of the Pelasgic wall made up of stones so huge that the people of old believed that giants had built it.

The first houses must have been of wood, and then came temples of stone, but not of marble, for the Athenians learned to carve marble, so it is believed, from the islanders of Paros or of Aegina. In course of time, Athens and the temples and shrines of the Acropolis must have achieved some splendour, but the city and the structures on its guardian hill were burned down and destroyed in 480 B.C. by the Persians after the glorious defeat of Thermopylae.

Though the Persians were driven out in the course of the next twelve months, there were wars with other states and even threatened returns of the Persians, so that hostilities of some kind were frequent until 446 B.C. when the Thirty Years Peace between the Athenians and the Peloponnesian states began, though war did break out again in 431. It was

during this period and the years that immediately preceded it that the great Pericles rebuilt the ruined city and supervised the construction of temples on the Acropolis. Under his rule, Athens prospered and the arts flourished. In his age Herodotus wrote his books of travel, Thucydides his histories, whilst the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Aristophanes were performed in the theatres and they interpreted not only the eternal human emotions and passions, but they also satirized contemporary events and personages.

When the Romans first came they carried off statues and other works of art from the Parthenon, and in fact from all parts of Greece. The Island of Rhodes alone is supposed to have lost over three thousand statues in this wholesale plunder. On the other hand, under the Empire, some monuments were built and others restored, whilst the arts began to flourish once more, and the foundations of Byzantine civilization were laid down, though Athens itself was to shrink into a small town as the result of the Barbarian invasions.

In the Middle Ages, the French Dukes of Athens turned the Parthenon into a church, though it had been used for the same purpose by the Greeks, who transformed many of the other temples into Christian shrines. Later, under the Turks, the Parthenon became a mosque, and also, most unfortunately, a powder magazine.

In 1687, when the Venetians under Morosini were besieging Athens, they shelled the Acropolis, and the finest temple of antiquity blew up and was wrecked. The battery that fired the destructive salvos was commanded by the Count von Koenigsmark, whose nephew was assassinated when trying to elope with the wife of George I before he became King of England. Morosini distinguished himself by trying to remove the carving of the west pediment which displayed among other things, a spirited representation of the chariots of the gods. His intention was to place them on the Cathedral of St. Mark under the famous horses brought back from Constantinople by Doge Dandolo in 1204. When the centre part of this lovely pediment was being detached, the ropes of the pulley broke, and the precious monument was smashed.

Since the Turks did not value any of the Greek remains, and the making or keeping of representations of human beings

or animals were forbidden to them by their religion, travellers from Western Europe began to take away, or buy, any works of art that they could find. Early in the nineteenth century, Lord Elgin, the British Ambassador to the Sultan of Turkey, began negotiations to buy and remove sculptures from the Parthenon. When sanction had been obtained, the greater part of the frieze, the metopes and the pediments that remained were transported to London and eventually taken to the British Museum. Greek opinion is that these works of art should be returned to the country of origin and replaced on the Parthenon or in a museum nearby. So far the reply has been that when they were acquired the Turks were in power, and the elements of this treasure might have been pilfered or sold to individuals and scattered in different parts of the globe.

However, a still worse fate might have overtaken the Parthenon, for under the Bavarian dynasty, a proposal by a German architect to restore and reconstitute all the buildings on the Acropolis was seriously considered. It was about the same time that the Austrians were only just prevented from pulling down St. Mark's Cathedral and filling in the canals of Venice.

Fortunately the Acropolis survived as it was, changed only by the removal of some structures erected by the Turks. From its present remains we can conceive of the immensity created by Pericles in under twenty years, that is from 455 to 432 B.C. As Plutarch declared: "It is this above all, which makes the works of Pericles a source of wonder to us—the fact that they were created in so short a span and yet for all time. Each one possessed a beauty which seemed venerable the day that it was finished, and yet at the same time a youthful vigour which makes them appear to this day as if they were newly built. A bloom of eternal freshness hovers over these works of his and preserves them from the touch of time, as if some ageless spirit of youth, some ageless vitality had been breathed into them."

To realize the execution of his project Pericles commissioned Phidias to carry out and design the plan with the assistance of a team of technicians and artists. So Callicrates and Ictinus were the architects of the Parthenon, and Callicrates was also responsible for the construction of the third

wall to protect the road from Athens to Piraeus. The other work was apportioned out to suitable men of talent such as Mnesicles who took five years to complete the Propylaea, which is the gateway to the Acropolis. Though this monument is a great achievement, the Athenians suggested that Pericles had given the architect the job because he was his wife's lover. Plutarch suggests that Phidias himself was responsible for the immense statue of Athena which was nearly fifty feet in height, and was made of ivory to represent the flesh, and of 2,600 lb. of gold to form the garments and helmet, for Athena was the protectress of Athens and the Parthenon was her temple.

The eastern pediment was filled with carvings representing the birth of Athena who sprang fully armed out of the head of Zeus her father, and the western pediment contained a group representing the contest of Athena and Poseidon for the possession of Attica. The metopes and friezes pictured scenes of battle, processions and scenes from mythology. These are so well known that they do not need describing, any more than the present aspect of the Parthenon which everyone has seen in models and photographs from their earliest years.

In reality the Parthenon with its exquisite grace, and the mellow tints of its marble columns and walls does surpass all our expectation, whether seen from nearby, or from a distance. It is difficult to imagine it as it must have been in the time of Pericles, with a roof of polished cedar wood, with the statues painted to simulate life, and with a wealth of gold decoration.

Though Pericles did commission the Erechtheum, it was not completed until after his death, but the wonderful Porch of the Caryatids can still be considered as one of the lasting monuments to his glory. Strange and useless, these statues of girls used as columns, but they leave a deeper impression on the mind and on the imagination than any other monument of antiquity except perhaps the Parthenon itself. The Erechtheum was the most sacred shrine of Athena the virgin, and so within its precincts dwelt her priestesses, vowed to chastity whilst they were in office. Hence presumably the statues of the maidens that form the porch.

Now it is interesting to note that one of the friezes of the Parthenon depicts very vividly the Panathenaic procession

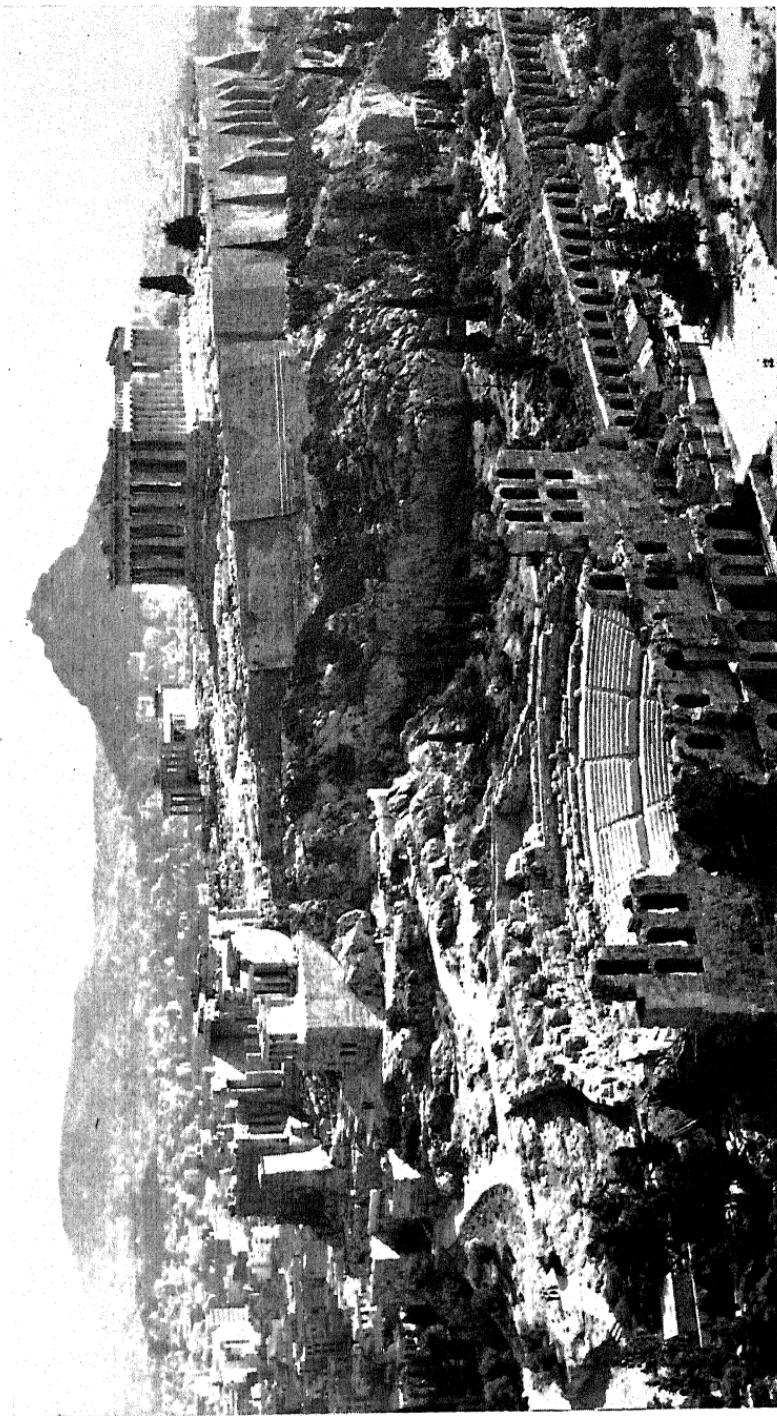
that used to set out from Athens to the shrines of the Acropolis, to celebrate the glories and worship of the city's great protectress. Every fourth year the feast of the goddess was given special importance when a cortège of thousands of citizens climbed up to the Acropolis by the Sacred Way, the path which is still used by visitors today, to commemorate the union of the people of Attica in the feast inaugurated by Theseus. At their head was a kind of ship on wheels with the *peplos* woven by the maidens of the city fluttering at the mast-head. This was a yellow robe embroidered with representations of the battles fought between the gods and a race of giants. With it came the priestesses and the priests in white robes and wearing wreaths of flowers. Afterwards there were horsemen, astride fiery steeds, elders bearing olive branches, choruses, and dancers.

The procession came through the marble columns of the Propylea, leaving the graceful little Temple of Athena on the right, looking much as it does today, and then advancing with the statue of Athena Nike on the left to the open space behind the Parthenon. This statue has disappeared like all the others including the immense bronze Athena Polias whose shining helmet and lance could be seen by sailors in the Bay.

Looking down from the south wall, you can see on the edge of the slopes first of all the Odeon of Herodes Atticus, a theatre seating over five thousand spectators. Next comes the Stoa of Euminides, the remains of a colonnade that led from the Odeon to the theatre of Dionysius, which held no less than fifteen thousand spectators. It was here that most of the plays of the great Greek dramatists were first performed before lively, appreciative and highly critical audiences.

On a terrace, above the Stoa of Euminides, there was a shrine dedicated to Aesculapius, the son of Apollo who became the god of healing.

However, one of the great enchantments of the Acropolis is the panorama of land and sea: the distant mountains of Argolis, the islands of Salamis, Aegina and Poros. To the north Mount Parnes, to the east the golden brown slopes of Hymettus, and in between, the Pentelikon, the hill of solid marble whose quarries supplied the stone for the buildings of Athens. Turning towards the sea, it is easy to evoke the vision of the king straining his eyes to see the ship bearing



The Acropolis, Athens



Figure in the
Archaeological
Museum, Athens



Ancient cannon on the island of Aegina

his son Theseus from the combat with the Minotaur, and believing that, after all, he had died since the sails were black.

At the far end of the terrace on the Acropolis, there is a small look-out built in the nineteenth century: here occurred a tragic act of gallantry that can compare with the finest feats of heroism of the ancients. After the invasion of Greece by the Germans in 1941, one of the Nazis ordered a Greek sentry to haul down the flag of his country. Wrapping himself up in the glorious blue standard of his nation, the soldier threw himself over the side of the cliff to certain death.

The Museum of the Acropolis on the opposite side of the terrace is, like all the museums in Greece, small but full of astonishing exhibits which have been found on the hill.

The Acropolis Museum has recently been reopened to the public and is unique for the study of early Attic sculpture, but as yet there is no adequate illustrated catalogue though there is a great deal of erudite literature dealing with the exhibits. It is a superb collection of the finds on the Acropolis and contains some of the oldest and most lovely pieces of Greek sculpture as well as fragments of temples and reliefs and a considerable portion of the west front of the Parthenon.

The beautiful Kore or Caryatids which still bear traces of colour and have the enchanted archaic smile, belong to a remote and timeless world. They were found buried not far from the foundations of the ancient temple to Athena where the Athenians had buried the scorched and damaged statues after the Persians burnt down the temple in the fifth century B.C.

The lovely statue called the Moschophore, a priest preparing for sacrifice, is in Hymettus marble and belongs to the sixth century. It has something of the timeless appeal of the Kore. The figure, originally painted in natural colours, stands austere and detached, but the hands firmly hold the little calf by the legs. It is treated with exquisite simplicity, being carved in the sixth century when little elaboration was used.

Among the fifth-century bas-reliefs perhaps the most beautiful are those of Athena standing erect but with slightly bowed head as she rests on a lance, and the superbly draped figure which may represent Victory leaning forward to fasten a sandal.

One of the most picturesque and least visited districts of Athens is the region of the flea market of the Plaka which can be reached quite easily from the Tower of the Winds.

On reaching this quarter, the number of open-air forges and metal shops explain the reason why there was a shrine to the blacksmith god Hephaistos nearby. There is charm in the narrow, crooked streets, the simple and popular little *taverna*, the small tree-lined squares. The top storey of many a house projects, and the wooden window frames still bear traces of the grating that screened the women from public gaze when Moslem families lived here. Then the actual market was the Bazaar of the Turks, but more old clothes are sold than Oriental curios. This fact alone should make the discovery of unusual treasures possible, for there is so little that few antique dealers take the trouble to come—they go instead to the northern provinces to seek out rare ikons, to Corfu to find English china and Sheffield plate brought there in the first half of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, there are some good coppersmiths and silversmiths in the Plaka, and a few junkshops where some fine old Byzantine paintings are picked up out of the mass of rather rubbishy modern stuff.

In the course of our last visit we stayed at the Alpha near Omonias Square, and soon made friends with many of the local café-keepers and restaurateurs. Some of the latter were in real Turkish style, for their proprietors had been expatriated from Asia Minor after the disaster of 1922. They roasted all sorts of blends of meat and offal on spits within sight of their customers who could have their food cooked exactly as they liked it. Then there were the chemists' shops, stocked with the beauty products and drugs of nearly every country in the world. One of these places was run by two very young girls who spoke English remarkably well and with a good accent. They told us that since the closing down of the British Institute, many young Athenians learned English at the American college, and that after they had obtained their diploma a number of the students went on to a privately run school of languages to have their American accent eradicated, and that they were then taught the English pronunciation by a course of elocution.

We also found time to visit the Archaeological Museum repeatedly since it is a few minutes' walk from Omonias

Square in the Patission Octovriou, a continuation of Eolou. In any case many of the buses that start near the King's Palace Hotel in the Venizelou will take you there in five or six minutes.

This museum contains objects from all over the Greek world and it also contains bronzes and vases found on the Acropolis as well as some sculpture from the Parthenon hill.

The rich treasures found in the tombs at Mycenae are displayed here, the wonderful golden goblets with reliefs of bulls, the death masks of gold, jewellery of unbelievable workmanship and belts of gold, all giving a fascinating picture of the splendour of the ancient city.

The important collection of votive and funerary reliefs is famous throughout the world, but the most impressive exhibits of the National Museum are the sculptures produced during the fifth and sixth centuries B.C. The great bronze figure of Zeus is almost overwhelming in its power. The outstretched arm perfectly balances the figure as the other arm is raised behind the god ready to hurl the thunderbolt. The small bronze figure of a jockey urging on his horse is a wonderful shade of green and full of nervous activity. There is nothing left of the horse, but the excitement and urgency of the race is strongly felt.

The rooms are arranged on a temporary basis and the exhibits are often changed, many treasures still being locked away and many new statues brought to light in the excavations are put on show. Like most other galleries and museums in Europe, the whole system of display is being brought up to date.

There are two other museums of special interest that are worth visiting, and as it happens both of them are in the Leoforos Vassilis Sofias, the broad avenue that runs from Syntagmatos (Constitution Square) along the north-western wall of the Old King's Palace to the suburb of Kifisia. This thoroughfare passes first of all through the new and fashionable quarter of Athens where the bulk of the consulates and embassies are to be found. The Byzantine Museum contains a collection of paintings, painted ikons, reproductions of frescoes and mosaics, all of them part of an art which cannot be seen so extensively anywhere else in the world, except perhaps in Russia. Those who have seen and enjoyed the

mosaics of Ravenna will find almost equal pleasure here. It is true that until recently Byzantine art was not widely appreciated, but the appreciation is worth acquiring. For instance, no one could fail to admire the reconstructions of Byzantine churches, which have been made from fragments collected from many different places and assembled here.

The Benaki Museum also contains Byzantine works of art but it is unique because of its extensive collection of Greek costumes, which are numerous, varied, and singularly colourful. The social centre of this district is Kolonaki Square. Here and in the adjoining streets, there are cafés and bars with an exclusive clientele of diplomats and fashionable Athenians.

Easter, the chief festival of the year, is kept with religious fervour by all practising Orthodox Christians, and even the less ardent respect its obligations. A period of carnival precedes Lent with processions and fancy dress parades. Children fly their kites during the time when the March winds carry them swiftly into the sky and they make a most attractive sight, painted with curious faces and imaginative designs. After the carnival comes "Clean Monday", the first day of Lent, when everyone who can goes into the country for the day and has very simple food to begin the fast which, in Greece, really is a fast. Indeed, those who observe it strictly do not eat enough to maintain good health, but the average peasant eats so little at any time, that it is hard to see how he can very well cut down his extremely simple diet.

Holy Week is devoted to religious ceremonies and the theatres and cinemas show only religious plays and films. The religious ceremonies are deeply moving and they increase in splendour until the magnificent processions of Easter Midnight reach heights of religious fervour.

On Wednesday of Holy Week, members of the congregation attend a service in which they are anointed with oil, and the sign of the Cross is made on their head, cheeks and chin. The same evening an anthem is sung hailing Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church, and on Maundy Thursday there is the service of the Crucifixion, during which the sacred ikon of Christ is hung upon a wooden cross fixed in the floor of the church. This white satin or red velvet cloth is embroidered in gold and silver with a design depicting the Descent from

the Cross. At the foot of the cross, worshippers lay their offerings of flowers until a great mound of the glowing, delicate spring blooms is heaped up around it.

On Good Friday, the first of the two great processions takes place all over the country, from the cathedral in Athens, from monasteries on the remotest mountain peaks and from the small country churches and chapels. During the day the sacred ikon is placed on a bier decorated with flowers and candles.

The ceremony follows much the same pattern all over Greece, though of course with varying degrees of splendour. In Athens the bier is borne from the cathedral, led by torch bearers and accompanied by chanting priests and choir boys. Then follow priests in wonderful robes of all colours, bishops, and the Archbishop in white robes embroidered with silver and gold, swinging incense as they bless the crowds. Following them come groups from different organizations, and finally, members of the public carrying lighted yellow candles, swell the procession. From the hills streams of worshippers can be seen converging on the churches and chapels from a great distance as their tiny candle flames make a golden chain of light.

On Easter Saturday, there is a great deal of activity in every Greek household. Eggs are boiled in coloured dyes and the more ambitious make patterns on them by tying a leaf round each egg before dipping it. The different coloured hard-boiled eggs are piled in dishes ready for the festivities which take place after midnight on Saturday. Eggs are a symbol of life and happiness to the Greeks. They believe life and happiness is imprisoned in the egg, but its shell has to be broken, to let these gifts come forth. Everyone tries to break as many eggs as possible before his own is broken. So, after midnight, if you have an egg in your hand, anyone may come along and bring his egg sharply down on it to break it open.

There is as much to do at Easter in a Greek family as there is at Christmas in England. The lamb has to be prepared with the same care as the turkey. Presents and greetings have to be left at friends' houses. Easter cards and cardboard eggs are varied and really enchanting in design. Table centres of chicken and eggs are made in icing and the whole house is decorated with spring flowers. It is partly the religious Festival

of the Resurrection and partly the pagan Festival of Mother Earth and the spring when the land yields again and there is life and promise of harvest.

But, of course, the real climax of all these preparations is Easter Saturday at midnight. From pulpits erected in the open air, so that blessings showered from heaven at this time may reach the crowds, the priest reads the words spoken at the Sepulchre: "What have they done with my Lord?" A strange expectant hush comes over the crowd waiting with white candles burning. The priest has passed on the Eternal Light to them by kindling his own candle from the Sacred Flame burning on the altar. They are waiting for the promise of the Resurrection, and for the miracle of spring. "What have they done with my Lord?"—and the answer: "He is not here. He is risen: Christ is risen. *Christos anesti.*" And the crowd replies: "*Alithos anesti*—Indeed he is risen." There is a sigh of relief. The weeks of fast are over: it is Easter Day, it is spring. Fireworks cut across the indigo sky. Church bells ring out; lights are coming on in the churches and houses; everyone rejoices. Soon the trails of worshippers wander home, lighted candles in their hands, candles which must be kept alight for they are sacred, they have been kindled by the Eternal Light. If one blows out then it is lighted from another sacred candle, for how else can each worshipper's own ikon be rekindled for another year?

Now the feasting can begin. The people can have a full meal for the first time for a month, and many of them will go into the country or down by the sea to roast a lamb on a spit. For the poorer peasants this may well be the only really elaborate meal they have in the year except perhaps on their name day or at a wedding. There can scarcely be a person who does not get his share of the Easter lamb; whether it be the family roast or the village roast, strangers are always offered a portion with the usual Greek hospitality. This lamb, cooked over charcoal in a trough scooped out of the sand with the sea gently lapping a few yards away, tastes really delicious, as are all the *mezze* eaten while waiting for it to cook, and the fruit and sweetmeats afterwards. Naturally enough, most of the afternoon is spent sleeping off the meal before dancing on the sands and in the public squares and inns. This dancing can be a few simple steps in which anyone may join, a much

more elaborate set piece, or the brilliant graceful acrobatic swirling, twisting and leaping of the young men who perform intricate movements with the ease of ballet dancers.

Celebrations go on all day Sunday and Monday, often for longer. It is a National holiday week-end, and a prolonged one. Trains and buses are crowded to the maximum, station waiting-rooms are literally bursting their doors with the extra passengers forced into them, and every available vehicle and ridable animal is brought into service.

CHAPTER THREE

TRIPS ROUND ATHENS

Hymettus—Marathon—Sunion—Aegina—Hydra

IF SOME of the new quarters are inclined to be dull because of their insipid architecture, the outer suburbs of Athens are enchanting climatically and scenically, especially those on the eastern coast road, and places such as Kifisia, Psychico and Kolokythou which are high up and have prospects of the Acropolis and the Saronic Bay. Indeed, with a car it is profitable to stay at one of the hotels at Kifisia, and drive down to the city for sightseeing. In these inland suburbs, the air is cooler than on the plain, the gardens are full of flowers, and the countryside is near enough for pleasant walks off the main road. Now it is well to note that Piraeus is not a suburb but an industrial port with a growing population of close on 300,000 inhabitants. Apart from its rather picturesque waterfront and its taverns, it has no sights except for an archaeological museum with some important new exhibits which are of aesthetic as well as of historic interest.

On a really hot day, I cannot think of anything more agreeable than a drive to the summit of Mount Hymettus. For the really energetic, the alternative is to take a bus to Kaisariani, and then continue on foot, leaving the road and taking a path on the right, for a climb that should not take more than two hours. This must be done on reaching an old Byzantine monastery of mellow red brick surrounded by dark cypresses. The roof and the small dome are covered with dark pantiles, the sombre interior is lit up by the gleam of golden ikons and the resplendent colours of many frescoes. Outside is a small garden and the sound of a bubbling stream nearby fills the air. Usually too there is the murmur of bees, for the slopes of this mountain are covered with wild flowers. We were told that in the space of an hour some children had gathered more than a hundred different varieties, for Milton in his poem "The View from Hymettus" did not exaggerate. From the summit the prospect

includes the inland regions of Attica, parts of Euboea, Andros and Tinos, the cluster of Cyclades grouped round the central islet of Delos, and inevitably and nearer at hand, Cape Sunion and Athens. Far away to the west, and almost in line with Salamis, the Citadel of Akrocorinth can be discerned towering up beyond the Isthmus. Since the road to the top of Hymettus has been finished quite recently, this trip has not yet become a tourist agency excursion, because the ascent would be really perilous in a coach.

The view from Pentelikon is as beautiful, but this mountain has still to be climbed on foot and optimists say that the ascent takes over three hours.

A drive to Sunion can easily be arranged to take in Marathon to see the battlefield where a small army of Greeks decided the fate of Europe by defeating and driving back the Persian host of Xerxes in 492 B.C. The losses of the victors must have been small, for 192 Athenians only were buried under the forty foot mound that can still be seen. According to the Ancients, the ghosts of the dead haunted this field and on still nights the clashing of arms, the neighing and trampling of horses could be distinctly heard.

The inland road to Sunion is only moderately attractive, but between Thorikon and Lavrion the shafts of the silver mines discovered in the fifth century before Christ are still visible. These were worked by thousands of unfortunate slaves, but this mineral wealth contributed greatly to the prosperity of Athens, though some of it was apportioned by Themistocles to build up the navy that destroyed the Persian Fleet at Salamis.

A line of a dozen white columns glitter on the tall headland of Sunion, which has mercifully been spared by the speculative builder. This was the Temple of Poseidon, the god of the sea who was aptly enough worshipped here. Often this promontory proved difficult to pass, often, too, mariners were shipwrecked on its rocks. At this point, the fleet of Menelaus returning from Troy was scattered by the winds, and a helmsman struck by "Apollo's gentle blast" was buried on the point.

At Sunion, the clearness of the air, the radiance of the sun bring out the astonishing colours of the land and sea. From the temple the prospect is not only of the Bay and of the mountains of Argolis, but also of countless islands which cannot be

seen from elsewhere in Attica, save from the hills behind Athens, but here the waves froth on the beaches at one's feet, and the ships pass almost within earshot just as they did three thousand years ago.

When Byron came here he carved his name on a column—it can be found quite easily for the place has been cleaned up so that it stands out from hundreds of names scratched by travellers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the age of the Romantics it was a rather highbrow thing to do; so, for that matter, was the joining of two loving hearts by an arrow on the bark of an oak tree in a northern forest.

Not far from the point on the westward side there is a pleasant beach of sand, with an hotel, two or three restaurants and cafés by the waterside.

We lunched at the restaurant discreetly hidden in a fold of the ground—*mezze*, really fresh fish with a sauce of olive oil and lemon, strawberries, and white *retzina*, all this out of doors and preceded by an *ouzo* as a pick-me-up.

The return journey along the coast was a pleasant one—the road passes a succession of wooded sandy bays with red rocks, contrasting with the really deep blue of the sea in the inlets, the sombreness of the umbrella pines, the silvery grey green of olive trees. A few miles on we drove through the little resort of Varkiza at the head of a small deep bay. At Kavouri there is, if I remember rightly, a smart restaurant with a dance floor where cabaret performances are given at night, whilst from Glifadha to Phaleron there are a number of restaurants with terraces overlooking the sea. One in particular serves the best of lobsters and sea-food, which are sometimes included in a monumental *mezze*. In particular we liked the various kinds of fish roe pounded up with oil, the *garides* which are a kind of Dublin prawn, since we found the *suvlakia* and the *Mous-saka* too heavy at luncheon. The first is well known under the name of *kebab*, the second consists of minced veal mixed with herbs and covered with cheese or eggs.

By far the easiest and pleasantest day excursion by sea is to Aegina, for the crossing from Piraeus takes little over an hour and a half. There are day excursions organized by the agencies, but as all the boats sailing to the islands leave from the same wharf, there is no difficulty at all in making this trip without guidance, though in the long run it may be just as cheap to

take an inclusive tour with luncheon and transport from Athens and on the island included.

Now until the middle of the fifth century b.c. Aegina had been a sovereign state and a very prosperous one with a strong fleet and trading stations in the Black Sea and in many countries of the Mediterranean. In the sixth century, the school of sculpture of the island reached a very high state of perfection, but it seems probable that it had been founded by Ionian immigrants. However sculptors from Aegina worked in all parts of Greece and the islands. During the Persian Wars, the contingent of ships from Aegina played a most important part in the Battle of Salamis, but nevertheless the Athenians viewed the people of the island with distrust and suspicion. Situated almost opposite Piraeus, Aegina could dominate the shipping of the Saronic Bay and prove a most dangerous enemy in time of war. In 456 b.c. the Athenians captured the island after besieging the capital for nearly a year. Twenty-five years later, the victors expelled the entire population and installed in their place colonists from Attica.

The island never regained its prosperity. Seized by the Venetians in the Middle Ages, then taken by the Turks, it was reoccupied by Morosini for a while in the seventeenth century, to be forgotten once more until the Wars of Liberation. For a while, until the Turks were driven out of Athens, the Greek leader Capo d'Istria made the island his headquarters and one or two buildings used by his administration can still be seen.

The crossing from Piraeus is really enjoyable—long enough to be refreshing, and not long enough to be boring. If you have missed breakfast, there is a bar on board serving small cups of Greek coffee and cakes of a nondescript kind. Having missed breakfast, we longed quite frankly for an ample pot of tea or coffee, rolls and butter or a well loaded rack of toast. We may be cosmopolitans but our stomachs, like most stomachs, are nationalistic at times. However the lovely scenery of the Bay distracted our attention and especially the approach to the island which is hilly and wooded. The port is altogether delightful—a little dazzlingly white church like a mosque at the end of one pier, and the trawlers moored tightly side by side in the harbour. These graceful ships are painted brightly in red and blue and other colours. On the quayside, a long line

of café terraces are patronized by tourists, locals and eccentrically clad members of a colony of painters or would-be painters established here. The moment we sat down, charming children tried to sell us bags of pistachio nuts which are one of the staple products of the island. However, these small merchants were not too persistent and left us to bask in the sunlight and find exhilaration in the movement in the harbour and the movement on land, and most of all in the radiant mountains of the Island of Poros across the water, the hills of Salamis, and the ranges of hills on the Peloponnesus.

From Aegina, little time is required to go on to Poros where there is hotel accommodation near the entrancing little port. The island is well wooded and has some good beaches and has no important sights to visit. A pleasant place for a holiday, for it is a good centre for excursions by boat across the beautiful smooth waters of the narrow straits to the mainland. Near at hand is the unpretentious port of Galata, and just a little further away the ruins of Troezen, the birthplace of Theseus, whose legend has been well related by Mary Renault in *The King Must Die*, though a less romanticized version is available in North's translation of *Plutarch's Lives*, which I find more enjoyable.

At Aegina, the museum in the town and the temple of Venus in its immediate vicinity are of interest only to students of archaeology, whilst the Temple of Aphaea (or Athena) in the north-east of the island is one of the most remarkable monuments of its kind in Greece. Reached quite easily by a bus that leaves the quayside soon after the arrival of the morning boat from Piraeus, it stands on the top of a wooded hill in singularly lovely scenery. It was built on an artificial terrace on the site of a still older structure to commemorate the victory of Salamis, and dedicated either to Aphaea who was a deity traditionally worshipped on the island or to Athena who at the time seemed to be symbolic of Greek unity.

In a sense all these temples seem to have been built to a pattern and therefore they should all be very much alike. This is not the case, because the Greeks always chose the site of their monuments with such care and the gods that they worshipped were linked to the soil. So we cannot imagine the Parthenon anywhere else but on the Acropolis, and even to us today, the Athena of Attica belonged essentially to that shrine.

At Aegina, the temple on its hill overlooks the sea from which the islanders drew their prosperity and the ancient and now deserted harbour from which ships sailed to trade in all parts of the Ancient World.

After driving back, we lunched on the terrace of a restaurant about a mile to the south of the town, beginning with a kind of egg and potato pancake, continuing with fresh red mullet, and finishing up with an excellent goat's cheese. With this meal we drank a really honest *retzina* which did not make us sleepy in spite of the heat. Like most of the waterside taverns, this place had bathing cabins, for the clean little sand beach is rather too narrow for undressing in public. Best of all was the view. Ships glided past us gently on the smooth waters of the Straits, and the mountains in the background made a fitting décor to this really beautiful seascape. Since the climate of Aegina is much milder than the climate of Athens, we wondered whether we should come back here to spend the winter months in a peaceful sunlit setting. Houses with plumbing and electricity can be rented very cheaply unfurnished, and cheaply enough furnished except during the summer. The cost of food is about the same as in Britain, except that wine and oil are cheaper, and butter far more expensive. Heating can only conveniently be done by oil or electricity—an essential feature, for there is nowhere so cold as a hot country when it is cold.

Already some foreigners have settled here and doubtless others will follow suit, for Aegina has many advantages, the greatest of which is its accessibility, for it is possible to go to Athens for a day's shopping or entertainment.

Another island in the Saronic Gulf which is becoming increasingly popular is Hydra, about four hours from Piraeus, but it cannot be seen in a day trip though sailings are frequent. Incidentally some of the boats for this destination call at Aegina and there are also local services from Aegina, Poros and Spetsae. In the eighteenth century the inhabitants of Hydra threw off the Turkish yoke and their ships became the nucleus of the Greek Navy in the War of Liberation. Since they were first-class sailors, their trading vessels brought them great prosperity, until the advent of steam. Hydra is about twelve miles long and not more than three across at its broadest point. The little capital is built on a natural amphitheatre around the

diminutive harbour which is too shallow for the steamers to berth. The cafés and taverns on the quayside are unpretentious, but exceptionally cheerful, because of the presence of a colony of painters attracted here by the summer school of the Athens Academy of Arts which provides accommodation for students. Besides this Hydra has become popular with the cosmopolitan set of the Greek capital and so the atmosphere is like that of St. Tropez before it was publicized. Until now, the hotels available have been of the simpler kind, and people wishing to make a long stay have found it more practical to rent a villa or a large apartment.

On the other hand Spetsae, the last of the four islands of the Gulf, has one hotel of the category B besides a number of *pensions*. The sand beach provides excellent bathing but is inclined to be crowded during the summer season.

Now I have described these four islands because they can be easily reached from Athens by daily services and the services are even more frequent during the summer season. The time-tables may be a shade confusing, but it is fairly safe to assume that only a proportion of the sailings are listed, for a number of little steamers plying to the islands are not listed, and this applies just as much, or perhaps more, to the long-distance ships as to those going to Aegina, Poros or Hydra. The sea is frequently rough even in the Saronic Gulf and unless there are hotels of the categories A or B, the accommodation may be very simple indeed. The same applies to the food, but as a last resort, eggs, country bread and cheese are always good, and when fish is available it is invariably fresh. Then our experience has been that the beds are clean even in the humblest inns though they may quite frequently be hard.

However I know of no country which is changing more rapidly than Greece—hotels and tourist pavilions are springing up everywhere, and these hotels are if anything too luxurious, for there is need also to cater to visitors of modest means, and to provide sound unpretentious accommodation at medium rates. Practically all the rooms in the new hotels have sumptuous private bathrooms and in most cases a host of porters and page-boys in uniform are at hand to assist guests. Most of us would prefer to stay sometimes in places with more individuality and local character, in the country at any rate, and this should be possible now that Greece is becoming rapidly more

prosperous. These lines are not written in any spirit of condescension, but simply as a reminder that people of different countries have different ideas as to what constitutes essential needs.

Now there are, of course, many other day excursions to be made from Athens besides those that I am giving in this chapter. For instance it is not difficult to go out to the Island of Salamis, but this trip is likely to be of interest only to students of ancient history who wish to visit the scene of the naval battle which put an end to the threat of a Persian conquest of Eastern Europe. Then both buses and trains go to Chalkis, a fairly picturesque town in Euboea, the large island to the north-east of Athens that is connected to the mainland by a bridge. The journey is rather a long one, and without a car it is hard to reach the lovely scenery and the beaches beyond this town.

The C.H.A.T. (the National Tourist Association of Greece) organizes long-distance day trips to Delphi, to Mycenae and Epidaurus, and even to Corinth and Olympia. The mileage covered in each case is very high, but the scenery is lovely and varied, and in present circumstances it would be quite impossible to visit so much in so short a time by using ordinary public transport.

Coaches on these excursions have to pass through Daphni and Eleusis, but as there is not time to stop at these places, it is usual to visit them from Athens. Both can easily be reached by the frequent bus services from the centre and they are so close together that the trip can be done comfortably in a morning or an afternoon.

The western road out of Athens passes first through a rather uninspiring quarter of the town with houses of the late nineteenth century of the type that can be seen in the outskirts of a great many German cities. Their architecture not only lacks character but is frankly depressing. However the wind of change is blowing and contemporary Greek architects are developing a highly individual style which is well adapted to the scenery and the climate. In Athens itself, well designed blocks of flats are springing up everywhere, and some, though not all, of the new hotels sponsored by the government are boldly conceived, original and pleasing to the eye. In Greece, when expense is no object, architects can make use of the

limitless amount of marble of different kinds, colours and textures. In this atmosphere stone mellows well and one would have thought that new and exciting groups of sculptors would have begun to emulate their predecessors of two thousand four hundred years ago.

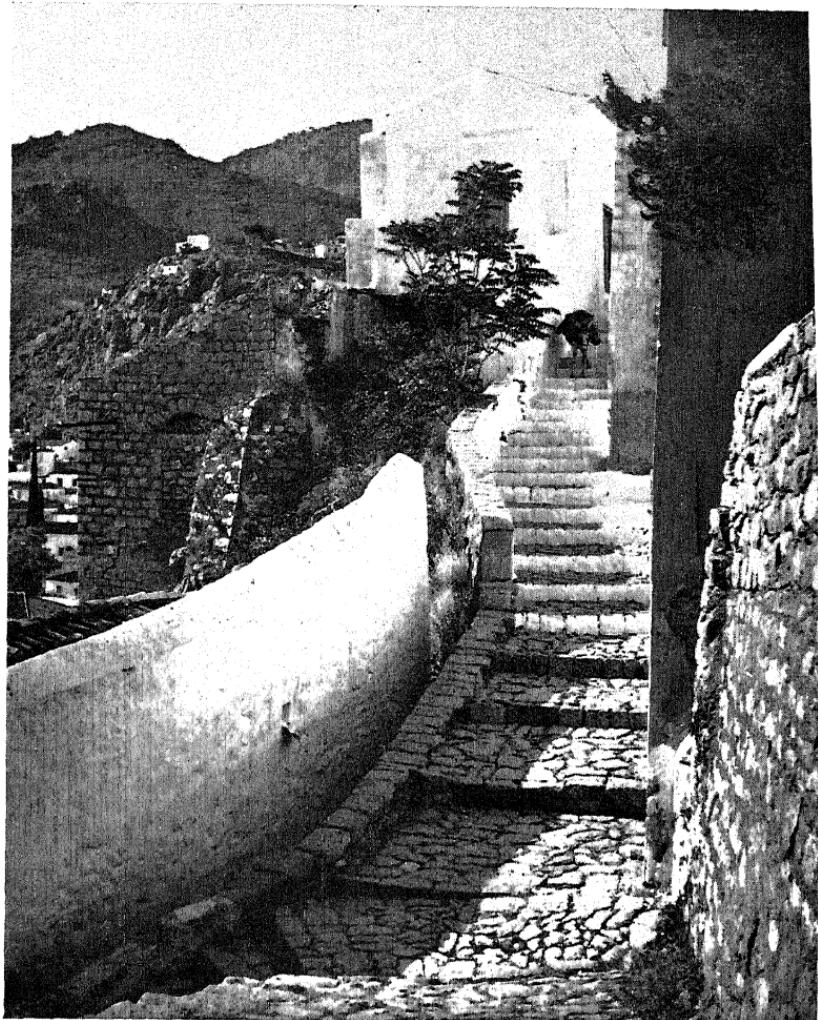
On reaching the confines of the city, cars can drive along a typically modern highway lined on either side by rather ram-shackle buildings: it follows approximately the course of the Sacred Way along which Athenians marched in procession to the still more Sacred Temple of Demeter and on to the hall where the mysteries of Eleusis were celebrated.

At the third mile, the signs of the industrial age diminish, and some trees remain on the site of the groves of Academy where Plato used to gather his pupils round him and teach them philosophy. On the lintel of his front door was the inscription: "Let no one enter who is unacquainted with geometry."

After crossing the river Cephissus, where the processions used to halt for refreshment, the road climbs up a wooded hill, from which one may look down to the narrow straits of Salamis, the setting for one of the most dramatic battles in the history of the world. Sure of victory because of the overwhelming number of his ships, Xerxes watched the conflict from a golden throne set up on a hill and prepared to dictate the progressive stages of his triumph to the scribes gathered around him. Almost at his feet, in the narrow channel between the island and the coast of Attica, the rival fleets were to meet "at the time of the day when the wind usually blows freshly from the sea". Earlier in the day, the Greeks had sacrificed three young Persians and had been much encouraged because someone had been heard to sneeze on the right hand side of the altar, an omen considered to be highly favourable, though their fleet appeared to be completely encircled by the Persians.

The monastery of Daphni, with its honey-coloured walls standing out against the sombreness of the surrounding pine-woods, its graceful dome, and warm red tiled roof, possesses such charm that it must not be visited hurriedly. Indeed it is at its best in the early morning before the arrival of the numerous sightseers that may disturb its tranquillity.

First of all, there is a paved outer courtyard planted with olive trees, that half screen the ruins of the monastery cells,



Ascending steps, island of Hydra



(Above) Kaissariani,
Athens



(Right) Woman in native
costume carrying pitcher,
Skyros

and then to the right, there is a vision of the entrance to the church, guarded on either side by dark cypresses.

Built originally in the fifth century on the site of a Temple of Apollo, the present monastery was constructed in the second half of the twelfth century, a period when there was a resurgence of talent and genius in Byzantine art that may almost be compared to the brilliance of Ravenna in the seventh century.

The mosaics here are less majestic, less intellectual, and more naturalistic, but this is not due to the skilful patching and restoring of seventy years ago. Here they were executed at a time when Greece had become a remote province of Byzantium and Athens was no more than a small market town and so the presentation was that of the age. The Nativity, for instance, and the Adoration of the Magi are truer to the life of Christ because Greece was now a small pastoral country like Palestine, but the mountains decorated with brilliant flowers and plants are those of Attica, and the shepherds are exactly like those which we can see today tending their flocks on the slopes of Parnassus. Needless to say the radiant colours fill the sombreness of the church with light and with movement, for these mosaics do not possess the stilted timelessness of those of Sant' Apollinare which are in many ways more impressive. However, the same impression is given by the figure of Christ, the Pantocrator which fills up the greater part of the Dome though it is surrounded by the effigies of sixteen prophets. Here Christ is shown with all the austerity of the Almighty God and Law-giver, Creator of Heaven and Earth, the interpretation so often favoured in Byzantine churches in all parts of the Mediterranean.

After leaving the sylvan beauty of Daphni, the road descends to an Eleusis which holds but little mystery, for it is now an industrial town, given up to the production of aluminium, soap, cement, and alcohol. In the circumstances, a visit to the scanty ruins of the sanctuary is mere pedantry, except for those who have made a prolonged study of ancient history. In this case, these ruins could be highly interesting, for the secret of the mysteries has never been solved, although most Athenians were initiated into them in varying degrees. The theories propounded vary considerably, though most investigators agree that the revelations were of an ethical order, based most probably on the legend of Demeter and Proserpine. The story of

the abduction of the girl by Pluto and the six months sojourn in the underworld, which precedes her reappearance with the spring, may or may not have been held to solve the change of the seasons, and the riddle of existence, but it is a conceivable basis for the strange ritual that has been concealed from the outside world for two thousand six hundred years or more. We may also wonder whether the mysteries were not the origin of the cult of Satanism which still flourishes in most parts of the world, for the gods that were worshipped in Eleusis were gods of the underworld, in other words, fallen angels like Beelzebub and Astoreth who were cast out from Heaven. Since this theory has not been propounded by anyone else but myself, it need not be treated too seriously, though I am inclined to wonder whether it is not just as sound as many others.

CHAPTER FOUR

DELPHI

IN THE beginning of the nineteenth century Byron could

“Sigh o'er Delphi's long deserted shrine,
Where save the fountain, all is still”

but in the present time the haunt of the oracle on the slopes of Parnassus is apt to be full of movement especially between the hours of eleven and three, when the coachloads of tourists from Athens are being shepherded round the ruins. For the lone traveller, the ideal is to take the afternoon bus from Athens, and to stay the night. In the evening and in the early hours of the morning, this most beautiful of Greek villages is relatively quiet, and the wooded slopes where Apollo was worshipped are almost deserted.

Alternatively, it is possible to take a train from Athens or Thessaloniki to Livadia, and then to finish the journey by car, or to take the chance of finding a bus.

Lastly, there are the coach trips from Athens, organized by the C.H.A.T. and other tourist agencies, and these include the services of a guide, entries into the museum, luncheon and a deviation on the return journey to the Byzantine monastery of Hosia Loukas or Osia Loukas—I have seen this name spelt in seven different ways, and up to date I have never found anyone with sufficient authority to decide about these matters.

Anyway Delphi is 167 kilometres from Athens, and the tourist coaches start collecting passengers from their hotels at seven o'clock in the morning. After seemingly interminable waiting for latecomers, a vast herd of tourists is assembled in one of the central squares, and there they are sorted out according to their respective destinations, for the formula is the same wherever you may be going.

The process is rather a tedious one, but it is highly efficient and economic, for passengers may break their journey in Delphi, and they and their luggage are transported to the hotel where they intend to spend the night.

Despite a certain reluctance for organized travel and sightseeing we committed ourselves to the coach excursion to Delphi, so as to revisit old haunts, and to see them through the eyes of newcomers.

A quick glance round the coach confirmed our belief that the British represent only a relatively small part of the tourist traffic of Europe today. The Americans may be more numerous but they take shorter holidays and so the two English-speaking nations are outnumbered, first of all by the Germans, next by the French, and in certain countries by the Scandinavians also.

In this particular case it was obvious that the Germans and the Scandinavians had been put on separate coaches, probably because about half our companions were on their way back from Israel where they had been visiting relatives, or just simply the spiritual home of their ancestors. Most of the members of the French contingent had a strangely exotic look which was easily explained when we discovered that they were second generation colonists from Madagascar, and that some of them were to visit France for the first time. Another couple hailed from the Island of Mauritius where their family had been established since the middle of the eighteenth century. Though they travelled on a British passport they spoke English only moderately well, but their French was singularly clear and old-fashioned.

Mary, the guide, was a sturdy young Greek woman who faced up to an exhausting thirteen hours of work with great cheerfulness, although she had to say everything in English, French and German, and say it through a buzz of conversation.

Once past the chimneys and factories of Eleusis, the coach swerved northwards, whilst the road to Megara and to Argolis and the southern shore of the Gulf of Corinth goes straight on.

For many miles the highway climbed steeply, descending sometimes into valleys, but continuing to ascend progressively to the top of the 2,000 ft. high pass between the Pastra range and the Cithaeron mountain that marks the frontier between Attica and Boetia. Save for a few new plantations, the once wooded slopes are bare and arid, though in ancient times there were dense forests all over Greece.

On these mountains, the hunter Actaeon was torn to pieces by his fifty dogs after he had been transformed into a stag by

Diana for watching her bathing with her nymphs in the Vale of Gargaphia. A pretty tale, but considering how proud these Greek deities were of their bodies, the punishment seems rather drastic.

In the intervals between the cities, the countryside is wild and sparsely inhabited. From time to time shepherds appear, driving their flocks up a hillside where there are no signs of human habitation, and that is because they camp out in rough huts in the summer and then come down to the plain in the winter. As a rule, they are not Greeks, and they belong to a pastoral tribe known as the Vlachs who are of Latin race and akin to the Rumanians, but I have not yet discovered whether any of these people really speak the language of their ancestors. These Vlachs however are to be found in most mountainous regions of northern Greece, and they came to Boetia presumably after the forests had disappeared. This woodland had many associations with the characters of mythology: since this region was the haunt of wild beasts, the child Oedipus was left here to perish by his father Laius King of Thebes. According to some legends, Dionysus, son of another King of Thebes, was brought up by the nymphs of these glades, but other lands have also claimed him as their own.

Thebes (Thevai) is a clean, modern-looking town which is of slight interest to the average traveller, though the foundations of many ancient buildings have been laid bare and could be of some interest to Greek scholars. In the Middle Ages, it had shrunk to the size of a small village for it had been replaced as a centre by Livadia.

Beyond Thebes, the Kopais, the largest lake in Greece, was drained by a British company in the mid-nineteenth century and developed for the production of cotton and rice. After the Second World War, the estate was expropriated by the Greek Government, and the owners compensated, so it seems, rather inadequately. Until then there was in this region a small community of Britons, living in much the same way as the gentry did in Ireland before 1914. They had pleasant country houses, dressed every night for dinner, and behaved generally speaking in the conventional way of the late nineteenth century.

Besides being the centre of the cotton industry, Livadia is noted for the production of attractive hand-made rugs. It has no monuments of interest except for a fairly well preserved

Frankish castle, high up on a neighbouring hilltop, and some houses of the so-called Turkish type, with projecting top floors and wooden balconies, a design of Byzantine origin. Our coach, with many others, made a halt in the main square, and we got out to drink a hasty cup of Greek coffee, and consume tiny pieces of lamb grilled on a small wooden skewer.

We were told that the excursion to the castle was worth doing because of the wild scenery, and that on the way the pedestrian passes the Fountain of Memory (*Mnemosyme*), and later on the Waters of Lethe (forgetfulness).

By and large, the only real reason for stopping at Livadia is because of the very modest restaurants and cafés, which are not nearly as good as those of Delphi.

On the left, in the distance, we were thrilled to see Mount Helikon, still capped with snow in the second half of April. It is a name full of romance, for like Parnassus it was sacred to Apollo and the Muses.

We wondered why so much of the land is associated with the best of Greek mythology for the inhabitants of Boetia were (and I believe still are) noted for their stupidity. Certainly on leaving Attica, the first impact is of a less alert and less intelligent race, though seemingly more kindly. They claim, however, that their ancestors were responsible for the alphabet.

Fifteen miles out from Livadia, our guide pointed out the place where Oedipus killed his father, a piece of information that was received with puzzled silence by about half the passengers of the coach—the others appeared to have prepared for their visit to Greece, by several months of solid reading. Three miles further on we caught our first glimpse of Mount Parnassus from this side. Towering, sombre and mysterious, it had all the quality of a painting by one of the romantics who loved to exaggerate the horrific aspects of scenery, so that the Cheddar Gorge can be magnified to the size of the Grand Canyon of Arizona. There was a halt, and twenty cameras clicked to record most inadequately the haunt of the Muses. We stopped again outside the grim-looking mountain village of Arachova, and again snapshots were taken to be shown, doubtless, to unwilling friends in a dozen different countries. The interior of this village is not devoid of charm, for it is prospering now from the sale of home-made carpets and rugs, and the production of cheeses and wine.

After rounding the shoulder of a mountain, we descended to Delphi, built 2,000 ft. above the level of the sea, and a third of the way up the slope of Parnassus. To us as to the ancients, it seemed like the forlorn hub of the Universe, discovered by Zeus who sent two eagles flying from opposite directions to find the centre of the world.

Along the roadside lay the houses of the modern villages, enlivened by shops, hotels, cafés, and restaurants, and without the forlorn and deserted look that it had ten years ago, but the tranquillity has gone. Still, nothing can eliminate the majestic setting, the crystalline quality of the atmosphere, the wonderful bracing air, which can be so chill in the evenings and mornings, except in the fullness of summer. On the other hand, most of the hotels face south and overlook the densely wooded vale of Amphissa, at the foot of a steep slope, and beyond it the white houses of Itea, a small and attractive resort at the end of a deep inlet on the Gulf of Corinth. Passengers on cruise ships and on yachts often land here, and drive up by car to Delphi, and it is in a sense an easier and pleasanter approach than from Athens or Livadia.

This road passes through an immense olive grove with trees of great size and antiquity. Ahead, the horizon is almost filled by the sombre slopes of Mount Parnassus, which appears to be far higher than it is from this level. In this fertile valley, there is an abundance of wild flowers, the air is bracing, and the atmosphere singularly clear even for Greece.

On leaving the plain the highway winds steeply up to Delphi, and at every turn the panorama of sea and mountain expands, for the site of the shrine of Apollo was doubtless selected not only because it was held to be the centre of the universe, but because of the singular beauty of the scenery.

The origins of the sanctuary can be traced back to at least ten centuries before the birth of Christ, when it was dedicated to the worship of an earth goddess, Gea-Themis, and to Poseidon. In a cave dwelt an immense serpent, who guarded the approaches to the sacred precincts, and Pythia the priestess who was already famed as an oracle.

Apollo, who was born on the Island of Delos, was sometimes symbolized by a dolphin, and this, according to some authorities, is the origin of the name of Delphi. Like St. George, the god came to the slopes of Parnassus and killed the monster

python, though the oracle continued to prophesy, but with the voice of Zeus or of Apollo.

At some time in the eighth or seventh centuries, a number of neighbouring states formed an association to further the worship of the god, which was called the Amphictionic Council, and each member built a treasury to deposit the gifts made by their citizens.

It was a beginning of collectivity that was beneficial, since the associates undertook not to wage war on each other during the games which were held at intervals of a few years, and rules were laid down for the conduct of hostilities, if any, in a humane and civilized manner. Later, contests of music, singing, drama and oratory were organized.

At the heights of its fame, this sanctuary must have been a place of great splendour, for even after Nero had removed five hundred statues from the precincts, three thousand remained to fill the Roman visitors with amazement.

Prizes in the games and other contests were sometimes in money, but always the victor was given a wreath of laurels, since the laurel is sacred to Apollo in whose honour the competitions had been held.

Near the roadside is the Castalian Spring in whose waters the priestess had to bathe to purify herself before she assumed her functions as oracle. A clear stream gushes out of the cliff and runs into a square basin carved out of the rock to serve as a bath. A slight mist rises up to lend an air of mystery to a scene that is steeped with the aura of a worship that came to an end nearly two thousand years ago, for here on this mountain side, the havoc of time lends more reality to the ghosts of mythology who continue to haunt the places where the gods were most revered.

Behind the Castalian Fountain a roadway leads direct to the Stadium which dominates the valley, and all the monuments of the sanctuary. And so, those who do not care about clambering up the rocky uneven surface of the Sacred Way through the ruins should go to the Stadium, and descend more comfortably when the sun is hot. For those who go upwards, the monuments in the precincts succeed each other in a bewildering manner. First came the monument of the Athenians offered to commemorate the victory of Marathon, but the sixteen statues that composed it have long since vanished. Then

came the offering to the Spartan General Lysander for successfully defeating the Athenians in the Peloponnesian War, but here again the plunderers and desecrators have been at work. Later, the Arcadians erected their offering a little further up the slope after defeating the Spartans, thirty years later on, and the Argives celebrated in a similar way their victories over the Spartans.

Still higher up, the different states built their treasuries, small temple-like structures in which they placed offerings to Apollo, the fruits of victory or the contributions of worshippers. Two of these alone survive: the first, the Treasury of the Siphnians is perpetuated in a plaster cast of the façades in the Museum, the second, the Treasury of the Athenians has been reconstructed, so that we can still enjoy its simple, noble lines.

Above, on the left, stood the Bouleuterion, the Council Chamber of the elders who ruled the Sanctuary and all its activities, and just beyond it still stands the Sibylla's Rock where a prophetess foretold the turmoil of the Trojan War, long before the coming of Apollo or even, most probably, of the Pythia. Nearby was the site of the first oracle, guarded closely by the monster whom Apollo slew, just below the broad terrace on which a temple was erected in his honour.

Almost on the same level stood the Tripod of Platea, a column of bronze nearly twenty feet high consisting of three writhing serpents supporting a golden tripod erected to celebrate the defeat of the Persians by the armies of the Greek states of Platea.

Indeed the number of monuments is bewildering, but the beauty of the scene is such, that the general impression is worth more perhaps than too close a study of the detail, especially if we let our imagination assist in evoking the splendours of the past. For instance, somewhere on the broad terrace which marks the site of the Temple of Apollo was a chamber to contain the *omphalos*, the stone symbolizing the navel or centre of the world. Somewhere there, too, was the chasm which exhaled the vapours which induced in the oracle the state of mind to make her prophecies as she chewed the bay leaves while seated on her tripod. Her pronouncements were usually cryptic and ambiguous so that they could always be interpreted to be correct though not necessarily in the manner anticipated by the seeker after truth.

Climbing still further up, we reach the theatre, seating nearly four thousand spectators, and then last of all the Stadium on the heights.

Ideally, the precincts of the Sanctuary should be visited in the early morning or the late afternoon, but it is well to remember that the sun sets early here since the highest mountains lie to the west. In either case the air can be chill at this altitude though tonic and more bracing perhaps than anywhere else in Greece. When we return here it must most certainly be when the moon is full, for then of all times should one see the Mount Parnassus, the Castalian Spring, and the ruins of the Sanctuary bathed in a clear silver radiance.

Incidentally, the Museum is small, but full of treasures rescued from neighbouring ruins; there is for instance the famous and impressive statue of a charioteer, presented by the city of Gela in Sicily after their team had won a chariot race at Delphi early in the fifth century before Christ. The effigy of Antinous the youth beloved and deified by Hadrian is, as might be expected, highly sentimentalized in the decadent and academic Roman manner, but it is interesting as a portrait.

Some attempts at reconstruction and restoration are less praiseworthy, but the authentic bas-reliefs from the Treasury of the Athenians are of great artistic value.

Below the Castalian Spring just a few steps off the Arachova road are the Marmaria (marbles), ruins of temples dedicated to Athena and the exquisitely beautiful Tholos, a marble rotunda of the sixth century B.C. This is surely one of the loveliest things to be seen in Delphi, even perhaps in the whole of Greece. Three slender columns of the Doric order stand upright whilst the bases of seventeen others complete the circle. Originally the temple had twenty columns, but only the bases remain of most of them. Three have been set upright complete with their entablature, and it is these three columns of shining white marble softly gleaming amongst their setting of silver olives which are so moving in their absolute perfection. A deep sense of tranquillity pervades this precinct of Athena; sometimes a flight of white doves circles the rotunda and a gentle breeze whispers in the olive grove. On moonlight nights it is even more lovely when the marble turns to silver and the trees to a soft mossy green with shifting violet shadows.

For anyone not taking the return bus to Athens, it is quite

possible to continue northward by train to Thessaloniki via Larissa and the Vale of Tempe. The nearest station is Livadia, some thirty miles away and reached by bus. Larissa is, we have always found, a good stopping place, for although it is not a town for sightseeing, it is an excellent centre, well furnished with hotels and restaurants and an easy starting point for a visit to the Meteora Monasteries, or Janina. From Larissa, too, there are train and bus services to the little known town of Volos, situated at the foot of Mount Pelion, and port and market town for Thessaly. From this charming place with its houses straggling up the steep slopes from the sea, a most enchanting region of the countryside can be explored by bus, car, or on foot. There are pleasant villages on the wooded slopes of Mount Pelion and from the beech forests at the summit are wonderful views of Olympus and Ossa and of the Island of Euboea. Here in the forests and woods of this region lived the centaurs of Legend. The archers and hunters found sport here. From this region, too, came the wood for the Argonaut's ship. It is an exciting place to explore; for the athletic there is plenty of climbing and the less active can always hire a mule and roam the magical woods and groves.

However, a stay in this lovely countryside is almost certainly outside the itinerary of the normal traveller with a few weeks to spare, for naturally enough he wishes to see the Classical and Byzantine Monuments, and even the more important ones can occupy months.

From Larissa the railway to Thessaloniki runs north-east through the Vale of Tempe, and then more or less parallel to the east coast skirting the Gulf of Salonica.

The Vale of Tempe is justly famous for its beauty, but it is so different in aspect from the rest of Greece and so much greener, that its very strangeness enhances this undoubtedly loveliness. Many associations with ancient legend and the fact that, until recently, it formed the gateway between Turkey and Greece and still divides Classical from Byzantine Greece adds even more to its fascination.

The Valley lies between Olympus and Ossa and is only about seven miles long. Legend has it that Poseidon tore the mountains apart so that the great lake which occupied the plain of Thessaly could narrow into a torrent and flow out into the Aegean. Down from the slopes of Ossa and Olympus, brooks

and rushing streams flow and form waterfalls, splashing amongst the profusion of flowering shrubs and vines. Along the bank of the River Pinios, huge plane trees spread their shade and poplars and willows sway in this fertile vale sacred to Apollo. Here, every nine years, laurel branches were picked and woven into wreaths for the victors in the games at Delphi. Today nightingales sing and shepherds still play their pipes. The ruins of medieval castles stand on the heights where they once guarded this narrow gap in the mountains.

From the Vale of Tempe the railway turns northwards along the coast with wonderful views of the Aegean dotted with islands with magical names. To the west rises the great towering bulk of Olympus in all its changing splendour. It still holds its magic for the Greeks as it did in ancient times when Zeus was busy manufacturing lightning, thunder, rain and hail on its heights. It often appears strangely shaped by some odd trick of mist or storm when it can seem cut in half, or it may entirely disappear save for its snowy tip shining against a patch of blue. It always seems very near in clear weather, for it stands out clean-cut in great detail, even when it is many miles away. Indeed, in north-eastern Greece, Olympus is always with us, and most excursions from Thessaloniki include a great variety of views of its splendid wooded slopes and shimmering peak.

After our third visit to Delphi, we came to the conclusion that the distance from Athens was too great for a day trip, and that whenever we did return we should stay overnight. The sanctuary is too large and too impressive to be seen properly in two hours and the exhibits of the museum are so outstanding that it is disastrous to examine them at a time when the halls are crowded with visitors. Finally, in really hot weather, the fourteen-hour day seems interminable. Glad as we were to see the monastery of Hosia Loukas, this deviation added a couple of hours to the time on the road, and most of our fellow passengers grew rather peevish and difficult.

Hosia Loukas (or Osia Loukas) was built by a hermit called Loukas the Stiriote in the tenth century, and he was born in the neighbouring hamlet of Styris which is now occupied by a colony of Albanians.

The mosaics of the great church of the monastery are among the most important Byzantine works of art of the eleventh

century, though in places the actual mosaics have vanished and have been replaced by inferior paintings. Originally, the walls of this church were decorated with a full representation of the stories of the New Testament, executed in a bold and vigorous manner but without the subtleness that distinguishes the mosaics of Daphni, and they lack the great brilliance of the masterpieces of Ravenna. There is accommodation to be had in the monastery, and meals can be obtained at a *taverna* within the grounds.

Twice a year (on February 7th and on May 3rd) pilgrims come to Osia Loukas for religious feasts which last for the greater part of the day, for the Greeks are pious, and the piety of the peasants is very real. Assuredly there is no other country where the priests are so closely associated with the lives of the people. That that is so is explained by the fact that for centuries the clergy helped to maintain the national aspirations of the Greeks. Since the Turks closed their schools in many places, the Greek language might well have disappeared if it had not been kept alive by its use in religious ceremonial. When the War of Liberation broke out, the national flag was unfurled first of all at the monastery of Ayia Lavros in the Peloponnesus where arms had been stored. Priests, monks and even prelates fought in the ranks of rebel armies, and nearly everywhere the clergy incited their parishioners to revolt and encouraged them to participate in what must have seemed at the time, a hopeless struggle.

In spite of our fatigue, we could not fail to enjoy the beauty of the scenery in the light of the late afternoon. At first the sky became paler, and the outlines of the hills grew darker. At times the scent of flowers drifted in through the windows of the coach, blended quite frequently by the acrid, astringent smell of the pine trees on the heights. Occasionally we passed a shepherd standing motionless by the roadside, revealing such dignity of bearing that we felt a sense of shame at our relative prosperity. Indeed the austerity of the lives of these pastoral folk is almost unbelievable in the present day. They sleep in caves or in huts of grass or branches that they make for themselves. They seldom drink anything else but water or the milk of their sheep or goats. They subsist on meagre portions of bread, sour curds or cheese, but they are excessively strong and hardy, for they have to endure great extremes of temperature

and walk great distances when their flocks have to be shifted to different altitudes.

Night fell with great suddenness, so suddenly that we were scarcely conscious of the change, since we are accustomed to the long sunsets and twilights of northern countries.

We drove through Thebes, just as the evening parade was starting—the streets were thronged with people strolling about and talking, gesticulating and laughing after their happy release from the work of the day. It was simply the beginning of the golden hour of leisure that makes life tolerable in Mediterranean countries and gives it a rhythm merely because this moment is turned into an occasion when the best possible clothes are worn, when friendships are fostered or made, and the youths and girls look at each other and may experience the sudden throb of falling in love.

By way of contrast the factories and ironworks of Eleusis were a blaze of light, but there were few people in the dark shadows of the streets.

There were lights also reflected in the satin smooth waters of the Saronic Bay, and a glow reflected in the depths of the sky made us realize that we were nearing Athens. Shortly afterwards the coach began its wandering journey to deposit passengers at their hotels, but we were lucky since our particular establishment came first on this route, so we left our companions who were destined to be scattered so soon to the four corners of the earth. Travel we felt is losing much of its magic because everything is being standardized in this industrial age. Towns, clothes and people are all beginning to look very much alike, but in our eyes the Greek countryside has changed so little, even though so many of the trappings of the past have been destroyed.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE DEEP SOUTH

Corinth—Patras—Olympia—Kalamai

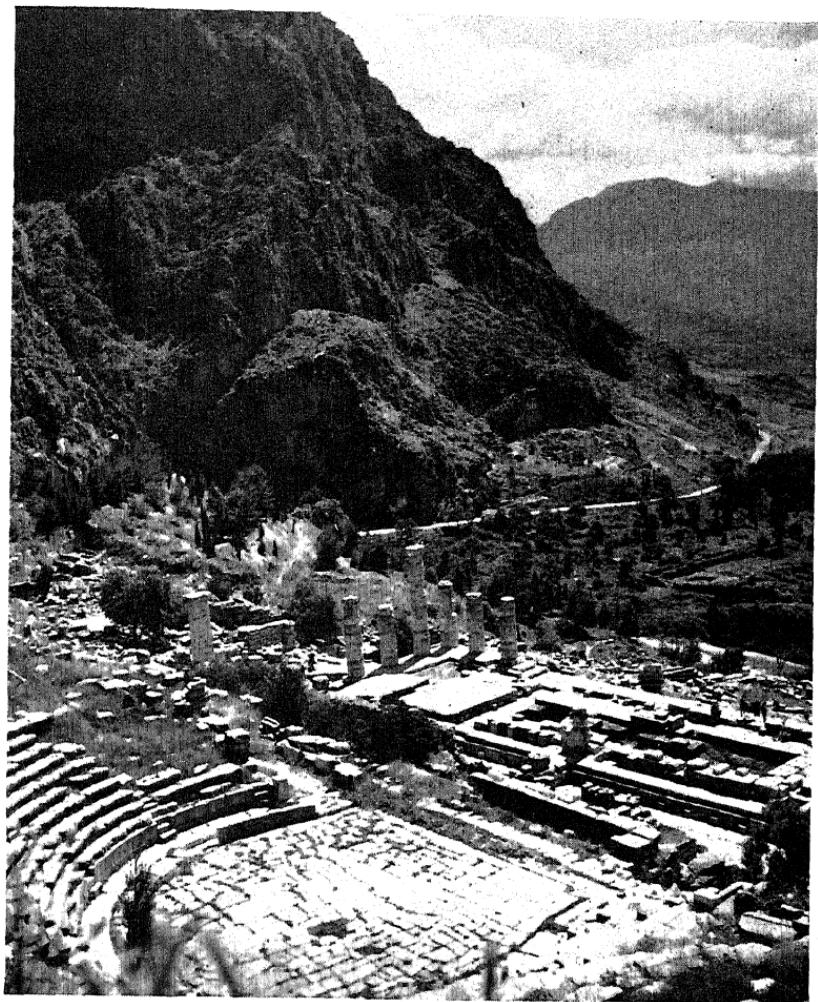
SINCE we have had considerable experience of public transport in Greece, we decided to test out the more luxurious methods of travel and go for the Four-day Classical Tour by Private Yacht, advertised by the local tourist agencies for the price of £25 (66 dollars) a head. Since these charges may be increased or diminished, it is possible to gauge what they may be in the future by assuming that they are about the same as *en pension* terms at a luxury hotel in Athens at the time of booking. On the cruise, they included transport from Athens to Piraeus and back, all transport for land excursions, entries to museums, and the services of a really competent and intelligent guide. The cabins were small but comfortable, the food excellent by local standards, and we found that our sixteen fellow passengers of different nationalities were agreeable companions who took a real interest in what they were to see without being unduly pedantic. Two of them were highly entertaining young Englishmen who had acquired a working knowledge of modern Greek by studying at home for a few months, though it is only fair to say that one of them had collected a Classical scholarship to an Oxford college. Of the six French passengers, two, a publisher and his wife, came from Paris, the other four were colonials from Madagascar. Lastly two American ladies of late middle age hailed from Boston. Both of them were highly educated New Englanders and they are in a class apart.

Cleo, our guide, was a singularly beautiful young married woman, born and brought up on the Island of Lesbos. She was the daughter of an eminent Greek statesman, but this did not prevent her from doing her job conscientiously, efficiently, and she gained the affection of her entire flock.

The first day we set out in the early morning, landing to pick up a coach near Isthmia, the eastern exit of the Corinth Canal, in order to drive over to old Corinth. Isthmia is a forlorn little place important only because the ships anchor offshore

there whilst waiting their turn to go through the Canal which is not broad enough for two-way traffic. It was here that we realized how well the Corinth of the Ancients was situated to trade and to dominate the other states of Greece. First of all ships could cross the isthmus on a system of rollers, then the Corinthians held harbours on both sides of this narrow tongue of land, and they could and did trade with the cities of the eastern Mediterranean as well as those of southern Italy, Sicily and the Adriatic. No less than four attempts were made to cut through the five miles of the isthmus, the earliest being in the fourth century B.C. Corinthia was at the height of its prosperity in the sixth century B.C. and the territory of this state spread for a few miles inland on either side of the isthmus, but the approach to it was guarded by high mountains, as well as by walls near by, whilst the city itself was built at the foot of the Akro-Corinth, a citadel on the crest of a hill nearly two thousand feet above the level of the sea. Modern Corinth is spread out on the south side of the Gulf of the same name, but it has no historical or artistic importance. It is by-passed by the road from Isthmia to Patras which goes almost directly to the village which has grown up outside the ruins of Ancient Corinth.

The most impressive of the ruins is undoubtedly the great sixth-century Temple to Apollo, more impressive than beautiful for the seven Doric columns are heavy and graceless, but of great interest as they are the earliest columns still standing in a reasonable state of preservation. The whole area of the ancient Greek town, later rebuilt by the Romans, is of interest to the layman as well as the archaeologist, for recent excavations have brought to light a great deal of evidence of the city's importance and prosperity both under the Greeks and Romans. The foundations and walls of a whole row of shops have been discovered and taverns where wells were sunk and supplied by fresh water from the Pirene fountain to keep the wine cool. Indeed hours could be spent following the plan of the cities and visualizing their ancient splendour, but for most of us the Temple of Apollo and a brief look at the shops and general layout will suffice. Between the Temple and the Museum—worth seeing for its fragments of all periods found in both the Roman and Greek towns—is the Fountain of Glauke, where Glauke, the water nymph daughter of King Creon and wife of Jason, leapt into the pool to quench the burning of the



Delphi



Olympia

poisoned bridal gown given her by Medea. Cacti and cypresses now grow beside it and flowers sprout from the rocky façade.

Southwards and towering above the site of the ancient cities is the Acropolis, Akro-Corinth, which can be reached most easily from the modern village with its great plane trees over the fountain fed from the Pirene spring. It takes an hour or more to reach the summit, but mules can be hired in the village. On the ruins of the Greek wall, the Byzantines, the Franks, the Venetians and the Turks built their own battlemented fortress which commands the entrance to the Peloponnesus. Fortress apart, which can in any case be seen quite well from below, it is well worth the climb to see what is probably the most spectacular panorama in Greece. The islands of Aegina and Salamis are easily recognizable, the hills of Attica and Sunion. In really clear weather the view extends to Athens where, perhaps not the city itself, but Mount Lycabettus can be distinguished as well as Pentelikon and Hymettus.

The road from Corinth to Patras hugs the coast for the greater part of the eighty miles that separate the two cities. To the north there are frequent prospects of the Gulf, and of the mountains on the far side: first of all the peak of Helikon, then Mount Parnassus, and later Ghiona and Vardousia, all of them covered with snow throughout the winter, like the ranges of the Peloponnesus to the south whose upper slopes are 7,500 ft. above the level of the sea. Nearer the sea, the peasants grow the grapes which have been exported dried for the past four centuries or more under the name of currants which is of course an English corruption of Corinth, or of *raisins de Corinth*. They were introduced to Western Europe most probably during the Frankish occupation of the Peloponnesus. This region is particularly fertile, perhaps because of the great number of streams that flow down from the mountains into the Gulf. Another pleasing feature in this landscape is formed by the long lines of cypresses, which are sometimes also planted in groves and are doubtless a relic of the Turkish occupation.

Twenty miles from Corinth is the charming resort of Xilokastron. It has an excellent beach of firm sand backed by pine-woods. Since it faces north it is relatively cool in summer and it has a number of hotels (none of which we have tried) as well as a tourist pavilion which is of course reliable. This place can be reached by train (on the Athens-Patras line) by public road

transport and, by especial arrangement with one of the travel agencies, passengers can be dropped here by one of the coaches going on excursion to Olympia. This method may be attained perhaps with a certain amount of argument, but it can be done.

In the winter, Athenians pass through Xilokastron on their way to the winter sports resort of Trikala, which is situated twenty miles to the south and four thousand feet up the slopes of Mount Goura. The three hotels there are, I believe, open in summer, but the road is not, or was not, a good one.

From Diakofton at the eightieth kilometre or fiftieth mile if you prefer it, a rack railway goes up the wild gorge of the Vouraiko river to the tenth-century monastery which is celebrated because of its antiquity and religious associations. Unfortunately this monastery of Megaspelion was destroyed by fire some years ago, but it has since been rebuilt. It is necessary to add that this place can only be reached by a fairly arduous climb from the station of Zaklorou-Megaspelion, but the scenery is dramatic and unusual, for the monastery is situated next to deep ravines and tall crags, with mountains and peaks nearby towering up against the sky. There is accommodation for visitors in the annexe. An eighth-century wax ikon of the Virgin is highly revered, because it is believed to have shed tears and even spoken in times of great stress such as the War of Liberation.

Kalavrita at the end of the rack railway is a summer resort that was completely destroyed by the Germans but has since been rebuilt. In the monastery Ayia Laura is preserved the Greek flag which was hoisted here to give the signal for the outbreak of the War of Liberation.

Aigion, eight miles to the west of Diakofton and on the road to Patras, is a modern town of importance to tourists only because of the ferry that crosses the Gulf to Itea, the port which gives access to Amphissa and to Delphi.

For the transport of cars to the north shore to continue to the west coast of northern Greece, it is necessary to take the ferry at Rion. The straits here are only two kilometres wide, and were guarded formerly on either side by castles, the ruins of which can still be seen.

Patras, four miles further on, has no monuments of historical or archaeological interest. It was rebuilt during the administration of Capodistria, who may well have been responsible for the

broad arcaded streets similar in general design to those constructed by the French and British in his native town of Corfu.

However, it is worth while taking the ferry at Rion to visit the picturesque little town of Navpaktos (Lepanto) which has kept the fortifications of the Venetians, for it is surrounded by solid ramparts, and two towers guard the entrance to the small harbour. The Castro is perched on a steep hill four hundred feet above the town, and commands a fine view of the straits, the mountains of Peloponnesus, and of the waters in which the battle of Lepanto was fought on October 7th, 1571.

In this epic combat the might of Turkish sea power was completely destroyed, for the fleet that opposed the Christians represented a concerted effort of all the Moslem powers of the Mediterranean to dominate southern Europe. On the Christian side, the Spanish, the Portuguese, the Italian cities (notably and more especially Genoa and Venice), Malta and some Imperialists had combined at the summons of Pope Pius V to ward off the deadly menace to the western countries, and the Commander, Don Juan of Austria, was a more or less untried young man of twenty-four. He succeeded beyond all expectations, partly because he was a natural leader, supported by tried warriors like Andrea Doria, Barbarigo, and the Prior of Malta, Giustiniani, and partly because of the simple and ingenious idea of arming the galley slaves and promising them their freedom in the event of victory.

After an hour and a half of fighting, at least 20,000 Moslems had perished, fifteen of their galleys had been sunk, and two hundred had been captured, whilst 7,500 Christians had been killed. On the other hand 12,000 Christian galley slaves were liberated, and the legend of Turkish invincibility at sea had been shattered. Henceforth, the Ottomans would seek to expand on land, and the Barbary Corsairs would concentrate on raids for slaves and plunder rather than for conquest. If the Venetians had not been weakened and distracted by their commitments on land, and the constant threat of attack by the Imperialists, they might have prevented the Turks from driving them out of Crete and their other possessions in the Levant.

The Peloponnesus is of course the peninsula of southern Greece which is linked up to the mainland by the Isthmus of Corinth, and for the benefit of those who have no sense of

geography we can explain that it is divided into the following regions: near the isthmus, Corinthia; along the southern shores of the Gulf of Corinth, and for twenty or thirty miles to the south of it, Achaia. In the centre, Arcadia. In the north-east, Elis, and immediately to the south of it, Pisatis (Pisa). To the south of Corinthia, and around Mycenae, Argolis. To the south-west, Messenia. To the south-east, Laconia, which is the territory of Sparta.

The geography of Greece is apt to be confusing since there are many towns with the same name, so there is a province called Achaia to the north-west of Euboea, and the two regions known as Locris are only twenty-five miles from each other.

The names of certain places have changed since Classical times, others were given an Italianate form by the Venetians, the Genoese or the Franks. Any name that is at all complicated can be, and is, spelt in several different ways. Lastly the Peloponnesus was known as the Morea, and was referred to under this name from the Frankish occupation up to the middle of the last century, but it is still called the Morea by some people in the present day.

The distance from Patras to Olympia is seventy-four miles, and the journey by train has been speeded up, for it now takes three hours. From Athens the distance is two hundred and nineteen miles, and the best train in the day leaves the capital at 11 o'clock and reaches its destination at 7.40 at night provided that there have been no hold-ups at stations to welcome home a local celebrity, a handful of conscripts, or just simply to speed a newly-married couple. Taken in the right way, journeys of this kind can be entertaining, for the Greeks are a very friendly people and in the course of a very long day, you may learn more about the country than in a month or even a year of motoring. The last time that one of us did this trip by rail, the train halted an hour and a half at a place which celebrated very fully the return of a popular station master. Another feature of travel by train is the friendly cross-questioning to which one has to submit—income, family life, conjugal relations and other intimacies are investigated very thoroughly and with amicable interest. Food and drink are shared, and after a few hours life-long friendships are established—we have had charming letters and postcards resulting from such encounters, years after the original meeting. However, for

those who have little time to spare and wish to see as much of the landscape as possible, it is obviously better to go by road.

For the first fourteen miles, the highway follows the coast passing a succession of sandy beaches, with cafés, outdoor taverns and bathing huts, and there are frequent prospects of the far side of the Gulf of Patras, of distant hills and of the cliffs of Cephalonia and Ithaca. The vegetation is lush and green, the gardens are full of flowers, and the crops of fruits and of flowers on this fertile plain are abundant. The atmosphere is suspiciously moist for there is no shortage of rain nor indeed of water on this western side of the country which was beloved of the Ancients, because of its immense trees, its beautiful flowers, and its rich meadows. Doubtless it was this potential wealth that attracted the Franks, for it was at Katha Athaia on this coast that they landed in 1204 to begin their conquest of the Morea. One of their leaders, Geoffrey de Villehardouin, author of the chronicle entitled the *Conquest of Jerusalem*, became Prince of Achaia (the Peloponnesus), and he and his immediate descendants ruled the country so well that the inhabitants prospered. In central Greece, the Burgundian family of de la Roche ruled over parts of Boetia and Attica, and other Frankish barons established themselves in Epirus and the remaining provinces of the north.

These were for the most part ejected by the Turks towards the end of the fifteenth century, whilst the Morea was conquered and annexed by the Sultan shortly after the fall of Constantinople.

The port of Killini, a few miles to the right of the highway to the south, was built by the Franks, and was known to them as Clarenza, a name which may have been the origin of the English title of Duke of Clarence. Near by, on a hill top, is a well-preserved medieval castle dating from this period. At Andravida, parts of the Gothic cathedral founded by the Franks can still be seen, for this town was the capital of the Princes of Achaia, and their parliaments were convened here.

Generally speaking, the towns and villages here appear to be far more prosperous than in eastern and southern Greece, whilst the north-east which produces tobacco has been hit by the popularity of Virginian cigarettes.

The lively city of Pyrgos is of no particular interest to the tourists since the inhabitants concentrate on the production

and export of currants which are shipped at the port of Katakolon, seven miles away. This place was founded in the nineteenth century, and its main attractions are a good bathing beach, and a tourist pavilion near the shore. Incidentally some of the coastal steamers call here, and there is a service to Zante.

In 1953, more than half the buildings on this lovely island were wrecked by a severe earthquake. Though the little capital has no sights in the strictest sense of the word, it is built in length on the shores of a curving bay, and the attractive arcaded streets like those of Corfu have been restored.

Here likewise, there is an aristocracy created by the Venetians, urban developments were made by the French during the Napoleonic wars, and the British engineers did excellent work. The climate is mild, and the soil is singularly fertile, so that Zante is noted for its oranges, its lemons, its grapes, and most of all for its excellent olive oil.

Many people are surprised to find that Olympia is in no sense a town, and never has been. From earliest times it has been a shrine and sanctuary, dedicated first of all, probably to a Minoan deity called Kronos and to an earth goddess, and later to Zeus whose son Hercules was believed to have initiated the games. Eventually Hera took the place of the earth goddess, whilst Hermes, Apollo and other deities were also reverenced here.

Another legend as to the origin of the Olympic games can be condensed as follows:

Pelops, grandson of Zeus, and son of Tantalus, King of Phrygia, was expelled from his own country and came to Greece where his enormous wealth was such that his influence was exerted throughout the land and it became known as the Peloponnesus or the Island of Pelops. Now this prince fell in love with Hippodamia, daughter of Oenomanus the King of Pisa in Elis.

Acceptable as Pelops was, there was a seemingly insurmountable obstacle to the marriage, for an oracle had declared that the King would be killed by his son-in-law. To safeguard himself the King announced that he would only bestow the hand of his daughter upon the man who would beat him in a chariot race, for he knew full well that his horses were swifter than those of any other mortal.

Not to be outdone, Pelops promised one of the royal grooms

half of his kingdom if he would take out one of the linchpins of the chariot which the King was to drive. In the race, the vehicle lost a wheel and Oenomanus was thrown out and killed, and Pelops married his daughter, murdered the untrustworthy charioteer and acquired for himself the whole of the peninsula.

In the early stages, the festival and the games were directed by Pisa. Later eight cities of Pisa and eight cities of Elis formed an association to control all the religious and sportive activities of Olympia. Later on other states and cities joined the amphictyony or federal control board of the Peloponnesus, but the people of Elis continued to direct the religious ceremonies of the festival.

The first regular Olympiad was held in the year 776 B.C. and gradually new shrines and temples were built, new events introduced into the games: there were not only chariot races, but horse races, and contests in running, wrestling, leaping, quoit throwing, javelin throwing for the pentathlon. Athletes were expected to undergo a course of intensive training for several months at Elis before they could be admitted to compete at Olympia. For the period of games and the weeks that preceded and succeeded them, there was a sacred truce enforced eventually by Sparta, the most powerful state of the Peloponnesus.

The games survived until the fourth century A.D., a full thousand years after they were initiated on a large scale, and they were patronized in one way or another by many Romans of note, including Nero, who was a great admirer of Greek culture.

The celebrated athlete, Milo of Crotona, came to the games in the sixth century before Christ and distinguished himself by winning the wrestling six times in succession. He is reputed to have carried a four-year-old heifer once round the stadium on his shoulders, after which he ate it in the course of a single day. Then also his contemporaries reported that he had made a record long jump of fifty feet.

He came to an unfortunate end in his old age. Passing through a forest he saw the trunk of a tree which had been partially split open by woodcutters. Sure of his strength, he attempted to pull the two sections apart, but they closed on his hands, and held him fast, in which state he was attacked and devoured by wolves.

Now the ancients revered Olympia not only because of the sacred character of the temples and shrines within its confines but also because it seemed to them a place of singular beauty; "the fairest spot in Greece", declared the orator Lysias. They loved the lush vegetation, the gently flowing rivers, and the green meadows spangled with flowers in the springtime. Looking eastwards, they could see the snow-capped ranges of Erymanthus and Cyllene rising above the densely wooded slopes that surround Olympia. The valley in which is situated the sacred grove of Zeus is about three miles in length and one mile broad. It is bounded to the south by a broad river running over a gravelly bed, and studded with small islands. The valley is Olympia, the hill next to it is Mount Chronius, the river the Alpheus. Through the pines and olive groves, flow two more streams, known to us as the Cladeus, until they join a larger stream. The precincts of Olympia were bounded to the south and to the east by a wall, to the north by Mount Chronius, and to the west by the Cladeus.

Looking down towards the River Alpheus from the southern slopes of the Mount, we could see first of all on the right the positions of the ancient Gymnasium and Prytaneum. Almost at our feet stood the row of ten treasures from west to east, and these were constructed by different states and contained statues and other offerings of great value and workmanship.

Below them, on a foundation of stone steps, were six statues of Zeus called Zanes, made from the fines levied from athletes who had broken any of the rules of the Games. Further to the left, in a wood of wild olives, and in a hollow at the foot of Mount Chronius, running from north to south was the Stadium with the starting point at the northern extremity. To the east of the Stadium was the Hippodrome, which had in the centre an altar surmounted by an eagle with outstretched wings, who was made to soar up into the air whenever a race started.

To the south-west of the precincts, the sculptor Phidias constructed an immense workshop where he and his helpers carved some of the most important statues that adorned the temples and sanctuaries of Olympia, the chief of which was the Temple of Olympian Zeus which stood more or less in the centre of the precincts. It was a Doric edifice, constructed in the fifth century B.C. and notable because of its immense size, for it was ninety-five feet in breadth, two hundred and thirty feet in

length, and sixty-eight from the base to the summit of the pediment. The interior was divided into three compartments by two rows of columns each in double tiers.

A golden vase adorned both ends of the roof. In the centre of both the pediments was a golden statue of Victory, and under the Victory a shield of gold having a figure of the Medusa upon it. The sculptures in the eastern pediment represent the contest between Pelops and King Oenomanus, whilst those of the western front illustrate the battle between the Lapiths and the Centaurs when the latter attempted to carry off the women attending the marriage feast of Hippodamia. The Centaurs were defeated and forced to retreat. The Lapiths were a more civilized people who were reputed to have invented bits and bridles for horses.

In the metopes there were scenes from the life of Hercules. The sculptures from the pediments and the metopes are displayed in the museum—the fragments have been reassembled, and the groups on the pediments in particular give an excellent impression of the splendours that decorated the temple, and the high relief of Hercules holding up the earth on his shoulders is full of strength and harmony.

Of the other exhibits, the Hermes of Praxiteles and the Victory of Paionios are too well known to need describing, but in reality, no photograph can convey their beauty to the full. A Victorian reconstitution of the former is something to avoid, for it does not in any way recapture the grace and firm lines of the original.

Within the temples Phidias had placed a colossal statue of Zeus that was over sixty feet high and made of ivory and gold. The ivory with which the greater part of the figure was overlaid, communicated to it the appearance of a living and intelligent object, whilst its accessories were decorated with gold, precious stones and paint. The god sat upon his throne, wearing a crown like a laurel wreath upon his head. In his right hand he supported a statue of Victory which he seemed to offer to the athletes who came here to worship him—it was made of ivory and gold and bore a chaplet. In his left hand was his staff, inlaid with metals of every description, and having an eagle perched upon its summit. The sandals of the deity were of gold, as also his robe, which was embroidered with figures of lilies. The throne on which he sat was adorned with

gold and precious stones, with ebony and with ivory, and with figures painted in bright colours or in relief.

Nothing at all is left of this statue for it was taken by the Byzantines to Constantinople where it was destroyed in one of the numerous conflagrations that used to break out in that city. Nevertheless in spite of the gold, the precious stones and the ivory, the statue remained untouched for eight hundred years.

However, it is perhaps just as well for the reputation of Phidias that this statue has vanished. The Ancient Greeks were justly proud of their artists, but it would seem that they had no taste, or at any rate that their taste was much the same as that of Munich in the mid-nineteenth century.

It is difficult to imagine the Venus of Milo with cheeks painted pink, blue eyes, very fair hair, and flesh-tinted body, but that was how she was presented when newly carved. The Parthenon with a roof of varnished and gilded wood, brightly adorned coloured statues and friezes must have had much in common with a popular cinema building, whereas the ruins of the present day have a grace and nobility that have inspired the entire world.

In the present day it is a delight to wander through the grove of Olympia, and inspect the columns and marbles of a past age, scattered among the trees and flowers in a setting of singular loveliness. One is not even tempted to evoke the scenes and gatherings of fifteen hundred years ago, for it would seem that this valley has never been more beautiful than it is now, despite a certain melancholy. Here, as in Delphi, it is a sound idea to stay the night so as to be able to explore the ruins before the floods of sightseers arrive by coach on the day trip from Athens. There is an excellent tourist pavilion, the Spap Hotel, almost hidden in the woods not far from the precincts. Next to it is the Olympia of a lower category, whilst there are some modest inns and *tavernas* in the village. Some years ago we tried the Altis Hotel and found it very simple indeed, very clean and very inexpensive.

Since that time, a charming row of trees that lent character to the street has been cut down, but apart from this unwelcome change, the village is still quite unspoilt, though it is hard to say whether it will preserve its present aspect for long.

Now for a few facts about the activities of Olympia in the remote past:

The Games were celebrated every four years. They lasted for five days and terminated on the full moon which succeeded the summer solstice.

The supreme victor was an athlete and not merely a rider or a driver in the races held on the Hippodrome. As we have noted, the meetings had a sacred character, and the prizes were of the simplest, but the winners gained glory not only for themselves but for their state, for their parents and for their comrades—in fact they were more or less canonized and their names were recorded in the Greek calendar. Great poets celebrated their achievements, and their statues were erected in the sacred grove next to those of the gods and of the heroes. The rareness of the celebrations added to the glory that was gained, and the splendour of summer and the radiance of the full moon were calculated to make them unforgettable for the participants and for the spectators, and yet for most of us there is far greater magic in Delphi with its keen mountain air, its dramatic situation on the slopes of Parnassus. If time prevents a visit to both places, the choice should most certainly fall on Delphi. For various reasons which are hard to explain, eastern Greece fulfils the usual conceptions of ancient Greece far more than the west, even though the west appears to have just as much to offer. In Attica and Argolis, the light is clearer, the air is more bracing, and the bareness of the hill brings out the beauty of the ruined temples and Frankish castles. Certain writers have even gone so far as to suggest that the lush vegetation of the Ionian islands and of Elis is not characteristic of Hellas. The fact is that in the Age of Pericles, the whole of Greece, and most of the islands including Crete, were densely wooded and far more fertile than in the present day, and because of this there was certainly more rain. Many of the legends of mythology support this contention which is confirmed by most of the historians of Classical times.

Until recently few foreigners visited the deep south because of the absence of roads, and even now the western coast road is very rough, though it is more than possible that by the time this book is published it may have been modernized. However the railway does go on to Kiparissia, finishing up at Kalamai, a city of 40,000 inhabitants, and in a sense the chief town of the deep south. Neither Kiparissia nor Kalamai possesses any real archaeological interest, but Kalamai has some hotels with

fair amenities, and it can be reached within an hour from Athens by the daily services of Olympic Airways. Pylos (Navarino), forty miles away, is situated on one of the loveliest bays in Greece, and incidentally one of the finest natural harbours in the whole of the Mediterranean.

Here we have a semi-circular bay two and a half miles in length with a Frankish castle at either horn, closed in by the long island of Sphacteria which gave its name to the naval battle in which the Spartan fleet was almost destroyed by the Athenians in the year 425 B.C. In 1827, rather more than two thousand years later, the British, the French and the Russians routed the Turkish Egyptian fleet and finally settled the destiny of Greece. The Moslems lost 6,000 men and 53 ships, the Allies only 172 killed and 470 wounded, of whom about a third were British. It was the French, however, who built the little town which is charmingly laid out with arcaded streets and an imposing square. Near at hand, on the top of a hill, is the solid castle built by the Turks in the fifteenth century and strengthened by the Venetians when they occupied the Morea towards the end of the sixteenth century. The whole structure is in a very fair state of preservation.

At the northern extremity of the bay, the Acropolis of Old Pylos is crowned by the ruins of a Frankish castle. In the northern slopes of this hill is the cave where Nestor was visited by Telemachus who was seeking to find his father Ulysses. The scene is thus described in the third book of the *Odyssey*:

“The sacred sun, above the waters raised,
Through heaven’s eternal portal blazed;
And wide o’er earth diffused his cheering ray
To gods and men to give the golden day.
Now on the coast of Pyle the vessel falls,
Before old Neleus’ venerable walls. . . .”

Methone, eight miles to the south of Pylos, can be reached by motor bus. The Venetian city, with its towers, walls and other fortifications is a singularly attractive feature of the landscape. The accommodation here is very simple, but the place is worth visiting because of the exceptional beauty of the landscape, and the wealth of archaeological treasures which have not yet been fully explored.

CHAPTER SIX

IN THE STEPS OF SCHLEIMANN

*Epidaurus—Mycenae—Nauplia—Tripolis—
Sparta-Mistra*

IT IS surprising that so few comments are made about the confusion of spelling and style of the names of places in Greece, but somehow or other, Greeks and foreigners do seem to get to their intended destinations without too much trouble. There are at least four ways of spelling most names because everybody has a different idea as to how to render Greek names in English, and some places are even referred to by their Latin or Italian names. To this difficulty must be added the Greek hatred of statistics and long-term planning which is compensated for by their splendid gift for improvisation. In this land of individualists, privately owned buses and ships are apt to start off on the spur of the moment or to change their itineraries without warning, but this of course does not apply to the services of the big tourist agencies which are as punctually regulated as anywhere else.

By rail it takes three hours to go to Mycenae and the walk from the station to the ruins of Agamemnon's palace takes less than an hour. The Hotel Belle Hélène is simple, clean and inexpensive, and it is on the way from the station to the Lion Gate at the entrance of the Acropolis of Mycenae.

An alternative is to stay at one of the excellent hotels at Nauplion and to go to Mycenae by train or coach. Easiest of all is to go for the day trip by coach from Athens and this includes visits to Corinth, Nauplia, Epidaurus and Mycenae, but the time taken for this outing is not less than thirteen hours.

Our second visit to this region was part of the itinerary of our cruise. The ship berthed at Old Epidaurus and we picked up a coach there which took us the round of the cities of Argolis. From Athens the road to the eastern Peloponnesus follows the north-western shore of the Saronic Bay, passing through Eleusis, Megara, and continuing to Corinth. Here

the highway to the south-west branches off to the left and passes near to the region of Nemea, the valley where Hercules slew the Nemean Lion. In the valley there was a splendid Temple of Zeus surrounded by a sacred grove in which games were celebrated on alternate years.

Dervenakia, further on, is of importance in the annals of the War of Liberation, for it was here that the partisan leader Kolokotronis annihilated a Turkish army by ordering his men to roll down boulders into the deep gorge through which the Ottoman soldiers were marching. At the forty-second kilometre from Corinth a road branches off to Mycenae about three miles away to the east.

Thirty miles from Corinth the town of Argos is the capital of a province and it gave its name to the region of Argolis which was originally dominated by the Kings of Mycenae. Eventually the people of Argos not only annexed Mycenae, but also the city of Nauplia on the coast, and the greater part of the north-eastern Peloponnesus. The tyrant Phidon should be remembered as he introduced the use of coins in Greece.

The city of Argos is an important agricultural centre, but otherwise the local architecture is featureless and the surrounding countryside in the immediate vicinity is rather uninteresting. The hotels and restaurants of this town appear to cater more especially to the local people and so it is advisable to press on to Nauplia where there is a far wider choice of food and accommodation.

From Piraeus to the little port of Old Epidaurus the chartered yachts or public steamers take from two or three hours, for the distance is not much more than twenty miles in fairly sheltered waters, though the sea in the Saronic Gulf can be quite rough at times. Scenically it is a lovely trip, for it is almost impossible to grow weary of the landscape of Attica and of the coast of Argolis. The course is to the south-west, leaving Salamis on the right and Aegina on the left. Ahead rise the hills of Argolis in various gradations of blue, violet or mauve according to the time of the day. If you are in luck, dolphins gambol round the ship, diving under it, pursuing each other in a lovable manner. The Ancients, we are told, claimed that these amiable creatures could be tamed, that they were capable of affection like human beings. Until quite recently, there were

fishermen on the Island of Ischia who could call up dolphins by whistling melodious tunes, and then, in the last few years, there were newspaper stories of a New Zealand beach where a dolphin gave rides to children on their holidays.

It seems curious that although the peoples of the Mediterranean appear to be insensitive to the sufferings of animals, the animals of their zone come nearer to human beings than those of northern climes: we can think of the werewolves of Calabria, the goats, the kingfishers of Greece, the lions of the Roman Empire that shrank back in fear in the presence of a virgin, and many more besides, if we include the snakes with healing virtues, the tortoises who symbolized wisdom.

After sailing for a while along the granite coast of the Peloponnesus with its sparse vegetation, our ship rounded a headland into the bay of Old Epidaurus which was a mass of colour. Nothing is left of the town of the Ancients which had temples to Aesculapius, Dionysus, Artemis and Aphrodite. From this harbour, ships sailed with cargoes to and from all the ports of Asia, but it is possible that still more prosperity came from the thousands who came to visit the Hieron of Aesculapius five miles inland, to be healed of their diseases or their wounds.

In the present day Old Epidaurus consists of little white, blue or pink washed houses scattered among the black umbrella pines that grow on the edge of a beach of sand that follows the curve of the bay. Red, purple or blue flowering bushes lend brilliance to the gardens, and on the top of the headland, the bright blue dome of a church shines.

On landing, the little town proved to be almost as attractive as from the sea. The shady main street was clean and gay and the inhabitants looked cheerful and relatively prosperous. We drove on through attractive, fairly wooded country to the dense woods that surround the Hieron, the greatest shrine of healing of the Ancient World whose peoples came here for courses of treatment. Patients slept in a kind of dormitory and during their slumber they had visions connected with their cure and these visions were brought about by the consultations that they had with the priests—in primitive times there must have been something like faith healing combined with suggestion, methods which are not unknown in the present day. Later on the Hieron became a kind of spa where the sick were made to diet, to have baths and perhaps even do exercises in the

gymnasium, the ruins of which can still be seen next to those of the stadium, for games were also held here.

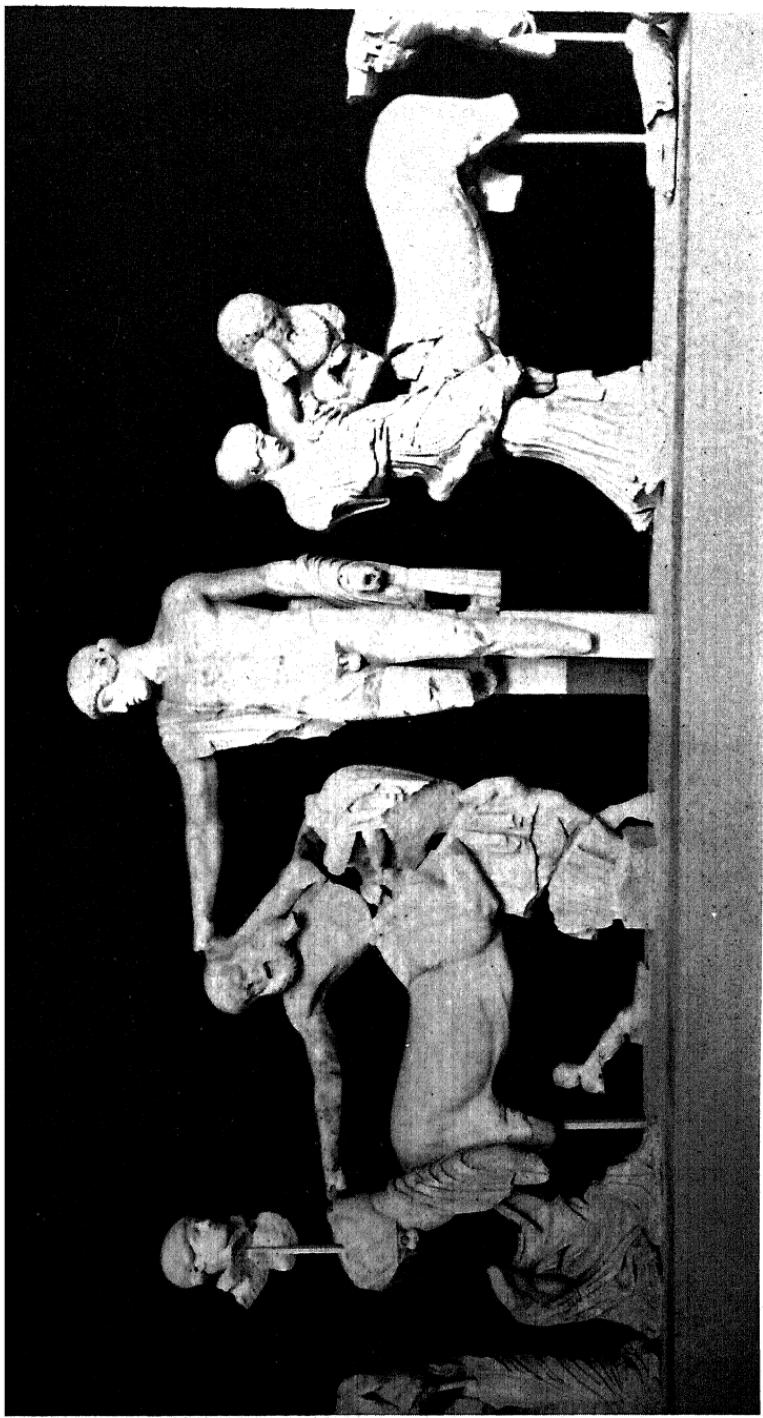
If the statuary has been removed from the Temples of Aesculapius, the pit in which the sacred snakes were kept is well preserved. Some authorities have suggested that their venom was used for curative purposes, others again maintain that patients put in close contact with the snakes may have been shaken out of hysteria by sheer fright. Whatever the truth may be, the snakes were used as a symbol of the science of medicine. Frequently, the snake of healing was carried to far-off regions in the event of dangerous epidemics. Since the Greek physicians attained a high degree of skill and scientific knowledge, it is perhaps safe to presume that there was some direct link between the snake and their methods of treatment.

In the museum of the Hieron can be seen not only recently excavated finds, but also a number of inscriptions recording the miraculous cures of pilgrims who had come to this shrine to be healed of their sickness, and these records are very similar to those that are displayed in shrines like Lourdes.

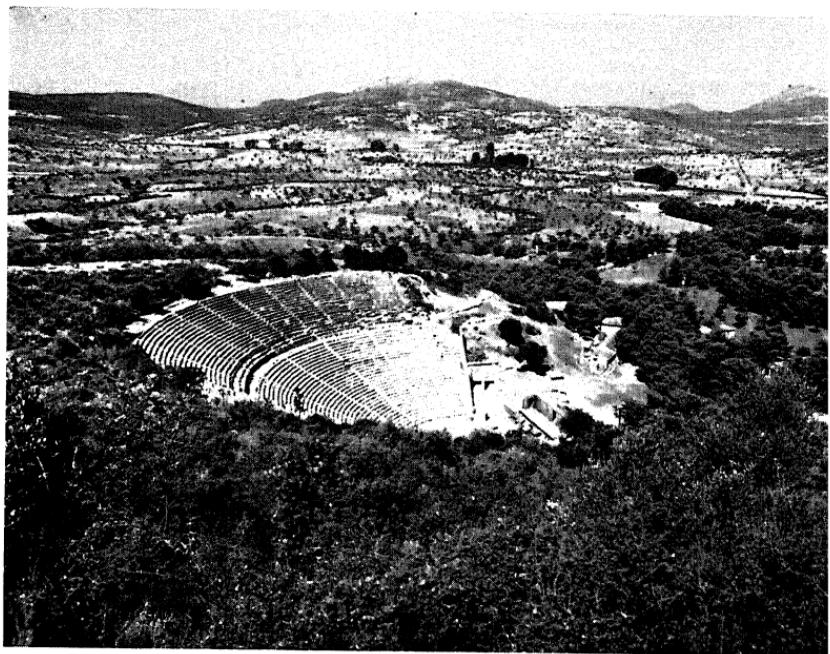
Near the museum the theatre is the best preserved of its kind and one of the most finely sited. Built in the fourth century, it held, and can still hold, nearly 15,000 spectators on the 55 tiers of seats which are so arranged that the afternoon sun shines from the back and on to the stage.

Every year between June 19th and July 20th performances of ancient Greek tragedies and comedies are given in this theatre by the National Theatre Company of Greece. Spectators can come from Athens on a day trip, or alternatively they can find accommodation at the Tourist Pavilion of the Hieron, in one of the six or seven hotels at Nauplia, or in one of the modest *pensions* of the port of Epidaurus. The standard of the performances is very high, the setting is, of course, superb, and the players display great talent, particularly in the tragedies, for who could be better than the Greeks to interpret the drama of their ancestors. Just as in the case of English, the speech of the populace is often harsh and ugly, but the declamation on the stage can be singularly moving and expressive.

Since Nauplia is less than twenty miles away from the Hieron of Aesculapius it is an admirable centre for an exploration of the antiquities of Argolis, but as it happens it is a singularly attractive place with good amenities and in a lovely setting.



Figures from the west pediment of the temple of Zeus, Olympia



Amphitheatre, Epidaurus



A performance of *Lysistrata* at the Epidaurus Festival

Originally it was a small maritime city state, but eventually it was absorbed by Argos and was developed as a port and a naval base in the sixth century B.C.

In the thirteenth century Nauplia was captured by the Franks and was fortified by the Duke of Athens who was a Burgundian like Geoffrey de Villehardouin, Prince of Achaia. Acquired in the next century by the Venetians, they held it on and off until it was finally annexed by the Turks in 1715. In 1822 it was captured by the Greeks and became the capital of the country until the establishment and coronation of a prince of the Bavarian Line in Athens in 1833.

Although Nauplia has less than 10,000 inhabitants it has preserved traces of the days when it was a metropolis though a small one. The Syntagma Square (Constitution Square) is, as in Athens, the hub of the city built in the shadow of the former Acropolis. It was set on a hill 700 feet high and crowned with a fortress constructed by the Venetians and extended by the Turks.

Besides this the only vestige of 250 years of Ottoman occupation is a mosque which has been deprived of its minaret and turned into a cinema. The Venetians, on the other hand, constructed the solid and massive ramparts, and in one of the narrow streets leading off the main square, there are four or five palaces of Italian architecture. In the square itself the Governor's Palace has a charming façade and bears a small effigy of the Lion of St. Mark.

The sea front facing the smooth clear waters of the bay is altogether delightful, for in front of some of the cafés, restaurants and hotels, tables are set out on the pavement under the trees, and there is an atmosphere of sophistication which is often lacking in provincial Greece, though admittedly the amenities are still rather simple compared to those found in places of similar standing in France or Italy.

In this part of Nauplia, the Grande Bretagne is an old established hotel with modern plumbing in a nineteenth-century setting. A little further on the Amphitron is a more luxurious establishment, situated on a slight eminence that overlooks the whole of the bay. A third hotel, the Bourzy, is installed in a castle built by the Venetians on a small island about half a mile out to sea.

From Nauplia the road to Corinth passes first of all through

Tiryns, and then a mile and a half further on through Argos, the town which we have already described briefly earlier on in this chapter. Tiryns is supposed to have flourished from the fourteenth to eleventh centuries before the birth of Christ. Mentioned twice by Homer, the Delphic oracles sent Hercules to live in this town after his attack of madness. The Acropolis of this town stands on a low hill and was built, according to the legend, for King Proeus by the Cyclops. The ruins are of great interest to archaeologists as they are claimed to give a very good idea of the planning of a royal palace at the time of the Trojan Wars. It was not a city, for the populace must have lived outside, but it was most certainly a large residence with separate quarters for the men and for the women, baths and some sort of throne room, the whole surrounded by very massive fortifications. Some authorities suggest Tiryns was annexed by Argos just before the Greeks set out for Troy, but until now no tangible evidence has been found to support this contention, though it seems probable that it is exact.

However, fresh discoveries are being made so frequently in different parts of Greece that theories of this kind are constantly changing.

Nevertheless any one who is about to visit Troy, Mycenae, Tiryns or Crete would do well to read the life of Schliemann in some form or other. First of all there are his memoirs and, published separately, accounts of his excavations entitled: *Ilios—City and Country of the Trojans*, *Trojan Antiquities*, *Mycenae* and *Tiryns*. For the less erudite, there is Robert Payne's biography of Schliemann, *The Gold of Troy*, published by Hale, Leonard Cottrell's *Bull of Minos*, published by Pan Books. To complete these last two works, it is also worth while to read the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; this suggestion of course only applies to people who are not Classical scholars, though many of these may find that their memories of Homer's texts have faded somewhat after the passage of years.

The story of Schliemann's quest to discover the ruins of Troy and the tomb of Agamemnon is surely one of the most romantic of modern times.

He was born in North Germany in 1822 in a remote little town of no importance, and his father was a Lutheran pastor. When he was seven years old the child's interest was aroused by a picture of the siege of Troy and a fresh impulse was given

to his curiosity when he was told that no trace had been found of the city that Priam and his comrades had defended with such valour for ten long years. From that moment Heinrich Schliemann determined to work hard and make a fortune so that he would have enough money to seek out and discover the ruins of Ilium and prove that Homer's heroes had really existed.

Since he was unhappy at home because of his father's drunkenness and lustful habits, the boy ran away to Hamburg and started to work for a pittance in a grocer's shop. In many ways the change was no improvement, for the long hours, insufficient food and hard work threatened to wreck his health and so he became a cabin boy on a merchant ship, so as to see something more of the world.

It was at this juncture that fate intervened to create for him an opportunity to become rich and to attain his heart's desire, though it is only fair to say that his success was entirely due to his industry, perseverance and intelligence, for he was put to the test in a manner which would certainly have daunted a less courageous youth. His ship was wrecked in the North Sea and after many hours of peril in a small boat, the survivors were landed at Amsterdam after losing all their possessions.

In Holland he found a job with a merchant and discovered in himself an aptitude for business which led him eventually to a post in the world-famous firm of Schroder & Co. and to swift promotion. In his spare time he studied languages, and with such success that he was sent to Russia to represent his organization. By the time he was thirty Schliemann was a rich man, but he continued his pursuit of wealth in different parts of the world, travelling widely, more especially in the countries of the Near East. Eventually he crossed the Atlantic to take part in the Californian gold rush and once there he became a naturalized American citizen. In the States, Schliemann was able to divorce his wife, a Russian woman, who had made him very unhappy for many years because she had no sympathy with the ambitions that continued to obsess him. He was by now forty-six years old, a very rich man, and as soon as he had disposed of his family ties he set out for Greece to begin his quest. One way and another he was well prepared for his task for he had a complete command of modern and ancient Greek, and for years he had spent much of his leisure studying

the works of Classical authors, for he believed that through them he would be guided to his goal.

Then, since he was now alone in the world, he wrote to the Archbishop of Athens asking him to find him a Greek wife. He declared that he would prefer her to be young and beautiful, but the two essential features that he desired were that she should have an enthusiasm for Homer and for her native country, and that she should have a good and loving heart.

The girl that was proposed to him was sixteen years old, highly educated for her age, and very beautiful—the marriage turned out to be not only very successful, but a love match and a partnership in work that were as near perfection as anyone could wish.

Now for many years past, professional and amateur archaeologists had been seeking to find the site of Troy but with no tangible results. Some historians maintained that the story of the *Iliad* was not only a legend, but pure fiction and that Priam's city had never existed.

Guided partly by instinct and partly by a very close study of Homer's text, Schliemann began to excavate the slopes of a hill in north-west Asia Minor opposite the Greek island of Lemnos which only a few of his predecessors had considered to be the place where the ruins of Ilium could be. Patient, determined and sure of himself, Schliemann worked for three seasons without discovering anything of note save pieces of pottery, fragments of tiles and unimportant statuary of indeterminable date, in fact the kind of débris to be found almost anywhere in the Mediterranean region where men have lived for many centuries.

He was about to give up his quest when suddenly he came upon treasure trove: goblets of gold, chains, gold bars, and two diadems of gold besides many thousands of objects made of the same metal. Rightly or wrongly he believed that he had discovered King Priam's treasure, that a layer of ashes that he had come upon proved not only that he had found Troy, but that Troy had been burnt down in the manner related by Homer. Having smuggled all his valuable "finds" out of Turkey, he informed the world at large of his success, but only after he had concealed the objects that he had excavated in the farms and houses of his wife's relatives in Greece.

One thing was certain: the Turkish authorities would no.

longer permit him to continue digging in Greece, whilst the Greeks would see to it that he did not get away with any more treasure trove in their country.

Having found Troy, as he believed, Schliemann now wished to turn his attention to Mycenae, the home of Agamemnon, the commander of the Greek army that besieged Troy, and his principal reason for doing so was that Homer had referred to "golden" Mycenae, and so he came to the conclusion that there was more treasure to be found there.

At this point it may prove of some use to evoke the circumstances in which Agamemnon set out for Troy and what happened on his return. Before he was to sail the king aroused the anger of Artemis by killing a stag, an animal which was sacred to her. In her fury the goddess visited the Greek army with a plague and held up the fleet by calming the winds. To appease the goddess the king decided to sacrifice to her his daughter Iphigenia and he ordered that this should be done without delay. Unknown to him the body of another girl was substituted and Iphigenia was spirited away by Artemis. Nevertheless the plague abated and a favourable wind began to blow and the Greeks were able to set sail for Troy.

Clytemnestra remained in Mycenae, filled with a deep hatred for her husband and nursing ideas of revenge. During the absence of Agamemnon she took a lover named Aegisthus and lived with him in the palace. Years passed and then came the news that Troy had been taken and that Cassandra, King Priam's daughter, had been taken by Agamemnon as a prize. In spite of her own adultery, Clytemnestra was roused to still greater fury by this news and she began to prepare her revenge. When at last her husband Agamemnon returned after a lapse of eighteen years, she pretended to welcome him and then murdered him whilst he was in his bath, after having thrown over him a net which made him incapable of resistance.

Orestes, their son, narrowly escaped the same fate, but was saved by his sister Electra who helped him to escape to Phocis, for Aegisthus had usurped the throne of Mycenae. Eight years later, Orestes returned, murdered his mother and her lover, and so avenged his father's death. Nevertheless, he was oppressed with the guilt of having committed matricide, and he was seized with madness and fled from country to country pursued by the Furies. However, according to most versions of

this story, Orestes was able to purge his offence and regain his sanity and eventually he took possession of his father's kingdom and married Hermione, daughter of Menelaus and Helen.

Now Schliemann knew all the versions of this story, including the tragedy of Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, but he based his researches at Mycenae on the text of Pausanias, the Greek historian who wrote a detailed account of what he saw in Argolis. In this he states that Agamemnon and his companions were buried within the gate over which the lions stand but that Clytemnestra and Aegisthus were not considered worthy to be interred with them and so their graves are "a little outside the walls".

For those who have the energy and patience to do so, the ideal way to approach the Acropolis of Mycenae is on foot, though it is possible to drive up all the way to it by car. However, the slow and rather arduous climb up the narrow valley that rises from the plain of Argos brings its reward. The countryside is bare, rugged but majestic. At times, the rocks glow in the sunshine for it is this radiance assuredly which made Homer write of golden Mycenae, rather than the treasures concealed in the tombs and vaults of this most ancient of cities. Indeed the landscape has an atmosphere of timelessness which is difficult to convey. There is a feeling that many generations dwelt here before Agamemnon, though the aura of the tragedy in which he was concerned lingers about the stones, the walls and the heights.

On the left-hand side is the inn of "La Belle Hélène" where so many generations of archaeologists have stayed, and if many visitors call here during the daytime, it has preserved all the delightful simplicity that it possessed in the nineteenth century. Farther on there are the immense tombs carved out of the rock and shaped like beehives—the first, known as the tomb of Agamemnon, is twenty feet high, twenty-eight feet long and about twenty feet wide.

Since the bodies brought here were buried in soft earth, all the treasures that may have been placed with them have long since disappeared, taken away doubtless by plunderers.

In earlier times, the tomb of Agamemnon was called the Treasury or Atreus, but this was before Schliemann had made his sensational discoveries within the walls of the Acropolis.

Five or six hundred yards beyond the tomb of Agamemnon

is a second beehive, called the tomb of Clytemnestra, and this attribution may well be correct if Pausanias is to be believed, but on the slope of the hill no less than a hundred more of these sepulchres have been discovered, though we may surmise that there remain many more to be laid bare.

The Acropolis stands on a crag nearly a thousand feet above the level of the sea and it is in turn dominated by a chain of grey peaks from twelve hundred to seventeen hundred feet higher. From the citadel, there is a vast prospect of the Plain of Argos, though few buildings are in sight, but far away on the horizon stretch endless lines of hills. Everywhere the landscape is treeless though it must have been covered with dense forests in the heyday of Mycenae, that is to say, from seventeen to twelve centuries before the birth of Christ.

Now before entering the citadel itself, the visitor comes upon an outer wall, built doubtless many years after the Acropolis which is enclosed in cyclopean ramparts of an early date. The Lion Gate provides access to the interior, but it was clearly constructed so as to be easily defended against attack. The workmanship appears to be Cretan, and the two lions facing each other above the lintel are clearly symbols of royal majesty. They are carved standing on their hind legs and are separated by a column on the base of which they rest their front paws. Just as in the beehive tombs, the lintel is formed of one immense stone, larger even than those used for the building of the ramparts.

Within them it is possible to trace the remains of a small city or palace with a granary and immense cistern for water, and the site of a hall that may well have been a throne room.

Within a few yards of the Lion Gate a circular well was revealed by Schliemann to be a vault where the members of the royal family of Mycenae were buried.

In 1876 he opened up five tombs and found in them the ashes of nineteen people, two of whom were small children, together with an immense treasure of gold ornaments of different kinds. The men's faces were covered with masks of gold and one woman wore a large gold diadem, but other women had smaller diadems. Besides these objects, there were swords, daggers, cups, seals and signet rings, many of them engraved or decorated with scenes of the greatest interest. There was, for instance, a sword blade engraved with a representation of

what appeared to be an Egyptian landscape with the Nile bordered with papyrus reeds and the cats that were so revered during the age of the Pharaohs. Some of the seals were adorned with the figures of women in the dresses fashionable in Minoan Crete, that is to say, that the skirts were stretched on crinolines, but the breasts of these ladies were bare.

The shields found next to the warriors were long and narrow like those of the Greeks that Homer described in the *Iliad*. There were also stumps of boars' teeth, used, according to the poet, to adorn helmets, and this feature is mentioned specifically in the Tenth Book of the *Iliad* and, most exciting of all, a cup of gold with four handles, just like the one used by Nestor and vividly pictured in the Eleventh Book of the *Iliad*. To quote Rieu's translation:

"It had four handles. Each was supported on two legs; on top, facing each other, a pair of golden doves were feeding."

In this the beautiful Hecamede mixed potage with goat's milk, cheese and white barley for the men to drink.

On finding one of the masks, Schliemann believed that he had discovered the skeleton of Agamemnon, though whether it was or not has been debated ever since.

Lastly, as Leonard Cottrell stresses in *The Bull of Minos*, a head of a bull in silver was found and this, together with objects decorated with the double axe of Crete, confirmed Schliemann's theory of the close contacts between Mycenae and Crete.

Now most of the objects brought out from the tombs are to be seen in the Archaeological Museum of Athens which is worth visiting after a tour of the ancient cities and temples of Greece as well as before. As for ourselves, we not only followed this course but we took with us a history of Greece and versions of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in translation, but before setting out and on return we consulted the works of Schliemann, and in particular *Mycenae and Tiryns*, published in 1878 by John Murray of London. This work is only to be found in certain libraries—otherwise it is difficult to find even in the best second-hand book shops.

The fast train, the automotrice, from Athens, goes to Tripolis by way of Corinth, Mycenae and Argos and a service of buses takes almost the same route. As Tripolis is well furnished with hotels of all categories, and is almost in the centre of the Peloponnesus, all roads of any importance to the traveller meet there; it is a lively town with cafés, restaurants and taverns, and an ideal place from which to visit the countryside. From here the railway runs south-west to Kalamai from which Methone and the western prong of the Peloponnesus can be easily reached, and from which also the central prong of the Mani can be explored—by the adventurous. North-west from Tripolis, the road runs to Olympia and directly south to Sparta and through the valley of the Eurotas, to Gythion and the south coast. Apart from these main routes which are mostly winding and along the edge of precipices, though very much improved lately, the roads are not to be recommended, for they are apt to be full of potholes, surfaced with rough stones, if indeed they are more than a track.

However, the road from Argos to Tripolis is good and the countryside most dramatic. Even the train climbs the great mountain ridge which stretches across Arcadia and passes its great barren peaks, grey and forbidding like those at Mycenae. The name Arcady conjures up visions of arcadian fields and shepherds playing their pipes as they tend their flocks by a flowing river, but in fact, the region is very mountainous today and not particularly fertile.

To explore it along the tracks is a different story, for on moonlight nights the fortunate ones can still see nymphs dancing and water nymphs coming ashore to play. Arcadia was the home of Pan and is still one of the more primitive parts of Greece, where old beliefs and superstitions are still maintained.

The road twists and turns steeply up into the mountains for about sixty miles, to dip into the valley for a few miles and then climbs again with almost continuous turns for six or seven miles before descending gently into the high enclosed plain of Tripolis, still 2,000 ft. above sea level.

Tripolis itself is entirely modern for in its seventeenth-century form of Tripolitza, it was completely destroyed by Ibrahim Pasha in 1828, then rebuilt and renamed.

The town has a wonderful climate, but is in no way remarkable from an architectural or monumental point of view,

though it has a certain charm. The spacious arcaded square is delightful and in the narrow side streets is a colourful flourishing bazaar.

Storks build their clumsy nests on the roof tops and make their magnificent flights across the sky, or stand motionless on a tower. There is a great variety of amusing and lively *tavernas* which offer rather more choice than elsewhere.

The town's great advantage, however, is that from it the whole of the Peloponnesus can be reached by bus or train and one or two places can be visited for the day. Southwards, the obvious excursion is to Sparta, of little interest in itself, with very few remains of the Classical period. It is merely a dull modern town, but three miles away is the wonderful old deserted Byzantine city of Mistra, reached by an easy road which is one of the loveliest walks in the whole of Greece.

By taking an early bus from Tripolis, it is possible to get to Sparta and back in a day, but for the more leisurely there are good hotels in Sparta and the evening or very early morning spent in exploring Mistra is more than enough reward for the extra night or two.

From Sparta, the sandy road has little traffic save the country bus which provides a rather infrequent service to Mistra, and a few peasants on donkeys. Even though there are coach tours to this historic city, it does not usually form part of the itinerary of the average traveller with two or three weeks to spend in Greece, so it remains completely unspoilt.

An avenue of graceful eucalyptus trees provides delicious shade, as it borders the olive groves where occasional black cypresses stand out strongly against the gently flickering silver olive leaves. In the spring, white and golden daisies sway in the breeze and great banks of asphodel make a gleaming background intensified by sheets of scarlet poppies. Here the shepherds can still be seen wearing their white fustenella and the women spin as they amble by on their donkeys, that is unless one of their menfolk is with them when he, of course, rides the donkey while she trudges behind with any extra baggage. It is a wonderful, smiling countryside that seems very far removed from the harsh way of life of the ancient Spartans.

The little village of Sparta-Mistra is set among heavily scented lemon trees and from the terrace of the *taverna* one can look back along the enchanting road to Sparta and on

towards the pink ochre mountain side, where the old walled Byzantine city crumbles on its slopes amongst cypresses and olive and a haze of wild flowers, and is dominated by the impressive remains of the Frankish castle built by Guillaume de Villehardouin, from which there is a wonderful view over the town.

The ruins of the city are almost lost, golden ochre against a rose ochre hill, and seem to be carved out of the warm earth. The old deserted streets are overgrown with flowers and grass, and creepers climb through the gaping windows. Churches with pantiled roofs and squat domes cling closely to the warm hillside and the domed tower of the golden Pantanassa convent is built against a steep rise amongst cypress trees. Here the hospitable nuns welcome visitors and show them the beautiful little church, more especially renowned for its superb wall paintings of the early fifteenth century and the magnificent composition of *The Raising of Lazarus*.

From the loggia of the convent there is an enchanting view of the valley of the Eurotas. The tranquil walled garden is carefully tended and, in early summer, filled with the intoxicating scent of lilies.

Of the other churches the more important are the Peribleptos church with its fourteenth-century detailed paintings, St. Demetrius which has even earlier paintings carried out in a style close to that of mosaic and with brilliant unconventional colours and a splendid decorative sense, the church of the Saints Theodores built on the same plan as Daphni but considerably smaller, and the monastery of Brotochion with its five cupolas and lower and upper church.

Some of the Byzantine churches are in a fair state of preservation and the Despots Palace still stands as do the ramparts and gateway to the upper town, but, apart from the churches, the real charm of Mistra lies in its Byzantine atmosphere and in the nostalgic decay of a beautiful city which, in the Middle Ages, had a population of 42,000 and now, apart from the convents, is virtually uninhabited. A few peasants have made their homes in some of the ruined houses. We saw one beautiful little garden cared for by an old man with a long white beard who seemed to have made his home in the crumbling foundations of one building. An old woman kept hens in a derelict courtyard, presumably living in the remains of the

house which surrounded it. A walk through the ruins at sunset is a magical experience, when the already rose-coloured hill-side and buildings take on an even deeper, warmer glow, and the whole city of Mistra seems aflame with its towers and domes against a paling sky, and its cypresses densely black against the misty silver olives.

CHAPTER SEVEN

MACEDONIA

Thessaloniki (Salonica)—Thessaly

FROM the romantic battlemented ramparts which stretch for several miles along the slopes of Mount Khortiatos, there are superb views of the ancient Byzantine city of Thessaloniki, as well as of the modern town, the busy port with the wide sweep of the bay and of snow-capped Olympus. The top of this huge mountain is nearly always swathed in light cloud and it seems to reach right into the heavens, living up to its legendary name of the home of the gods.

Now this city of Macedonia was only joined up to Greece after the Balkan wars of 1912 and 1913. Until that time it had been under Turkish domination since before the fall of Constantinople. The Macedonia of the Ancients spread far beyond the limits of this province and though it was not Greek it fell under the influence of Greek art and culture.

When the Barbarians invaded the Roman Empire, Goths, Huns and a number of Slav tribes swept over the Balkan peninsula, and the last of these were the ancestors of the Slovenes, the Serbs, the Croatians, the Bulgars and the Macedonians. Each of these groups spoke a Slavonic language. In the Middle Ages, after various occupations and dismemberments, Macedonia was once more part of the Byzantine Empire and remained so until the advent of the Turks.

In the present day, the original kingdom of Macedonia is divided between the Greeks, the Yugo-Slavs and the Bulgarians, but in each section the population is formed of different racial elements. As far as Greek Macedonia is concerned, most of the Turks were evacuated during the exchange of populations in 1923, and they were replaced by a far greater number of Hellenes from Asia Minor. Nevertheless in this northern province, there are still a certain number of inhabitants who are of Slav or Bulgarian origin. The Moslem trappings of the past have largely disappeared save in mountain

towns such as Janina, for mosques and other Turkish monuments were pulled down or adapted to other purposes such as cinemas and store-houses. Strangely enough it is in this region that the purest Greek is spoken, and recent events have if anything stimulated the spirit of patriotism.

In the First World War, the British, French, Russians, Italians and Greeks held a line of fortifications some fifty or sixty miles to the north of Salonica and stretching right across to the west coast in order to keep the Central Powers from advancing southwards to the Mediterranean. The damage done by the fighting was restricted to a relatively narrow strip of territory, but the unfortunate inhabitants had already suffered from destruction and depredations during the Balkan War which had ended only in 1913.

During the Second World War, the whole of Greece was overrun by the Germans, but the worst havoc was wrought during the conflict with the Communists which lasted from 1947 to 1950 and affected more especially the northern provinces. This region of Greece had been very prosperous, but the hostilities of the twentieth century were preceded in the nineteenth century by a state of anarchy that lasted for nearly a hundred years. First of all the people of Macedonia rebelled against the Turks and then the Turks kept them down by torture, massacres and burning villages and towns where there had been resistance to their régime.

Salonica, the capital of Macedonia and the most important town in Greece after Athens, was founded in 315 B.C. and took its name Thessaloniki from Alexander's sister. In the fifteenth century, the town was conquered by the Turks and remained Turkish until the beginning of this century. In 1917, a huge fire destroyed a large part of the city which was then rebuilt in the modern Greek style. The old city remains Byzantine with Turkish modifications and Turkish domestic architecture. Thessaloniki was one of the richest centres of Byzantine culture and it is therefore not surprising to find that many of the splendid churches still preserve very beautiful mosaics, though a considerable number were spoilt when the Turks pitted them so that they would more firmly hold the covering plaster which obscured them until comparatively recently. The great Rotunda, or Church of St. George, was built by the Romans at the end of the sixth century A.D. and it was converted into a

Christian church in the fifth century. Later, it was changed into a mosque by the Turks and one slender minaret still stands beside it in the untidy garden where wild flowers bloom in charming disarray.

The vast interior with its great dome is sad and empty, but the remains of some magnificent early mosaics still decorate the walls, in fact, those of praying priests in chasubles, on the lower dome, were so obviously of great power and beauty that they were even respected by the Sultan who ordered that they should be left untouched when the rest of the decorations were plastered over.

The minute church of St. Pantaleemon is a most lovely example of Byzantine brick architecture, and its colonnaded courtyard has a small fountain. Another delightful little building is the eleventh-century Panaghia ton Halkaeon, in which is the tomb of Christophorous. San Sophia was built in the same style as the church at Constantinople, but at a considerably later date, and it is only about two-thirds of the size. A domed basilica of the eighth century, its mosaics were added two centuries later. Other churches well worth seeing are St. Catherine, the Church of the Apostles with its five cupolas, and Moni Latomou, or St. David, a fifth-century church with a lovely mosaic of the vision of Ezekiel and Habakkuk.

The vast basilica of San Demetrius is traditionally said to mark the site of the martyrdom of the patron saint of Salonica. It has lovely *antico verde* pillars, but most important of all are the exceedingly interesting and beautiful mosaics which date from the seventh century. In particular, the mosaic of San Demetrius himself standing between the founders of the Church, is one of the most interesting which remained after the fire of 1917. The figures are austere yet handled with delicacy. They have a quiet majesty and the sober vertical lines of the robes are relieved by the small geometric patterns on the material.

Though Salonica has the untidy, rather shabby appearance common to most ports, at dawn and at dusk it is filled with enchantment. We have wandered on the hills above the town at sunset and seen the domes and few remaining minarets of the old city turn golden and soft pink, whilst the smooth waters of the bay, broken by the dark lines of ships and caïques, shone pale against the darkening hills. Sitting on the ramparts at

four o'clock on a June morning we watched the town and the port slowly break into colour through the pale silver mist and hold that colour until the blazing midday sun had drained it all away and left a steely-blue sea, a dusty, baking quayside relieved only by the dense cool black pools of shadow in the doorway of a warehouse, or the minute noon shadow of a mangy, skeleton cat as it slinks along in search of scraps. By lunch time the whole port seems to sleep, everyone is indoors eating, or sleeping it off. Those who lunch out, choose the *tavernas* near the waterfront, where tables are set under the trees faintly stirred by the sea breeze. Between five and five-thirty, life begins again and boys with trays of shoelaces, sweet-meats, honey cakes, pencils and pens, begin to circulate in the town, shopkeepers, dozing in chairs, rouse themselves, draw back the shutters and start calling for custom again. Soon, by half past six or seven, the great parade begins, the leisurely evening stroll along the quays and through the town, when the pedestrians take over and stop to chatter in the middle of the street, dressed in their best clothes. Nothing will hurry them and cars have to weave their way through the throng. It is all very cheerful and gay, if you do not happen to want to get from one end of the town to the other in a hurry.

The old town is interesting and picturesque at all times, but becomes beautiful and mysterious in the evening when the dusk hides its rather ramshackle appearance, and the long shadows give it mystery. The timbered houses with over-hanging upper storeys are colour-washed in pink, white or blue; some have brilliant decorations painted on the walls. Great nail-studded wooden doors in the windowless ground floors guard the entrance to quiet courtyards and elaborate iron grilles cover the windows. Through these narrow streets the road becomes almost a footpath, and winds up to the fortress and battlemented gateways and towers. To the west of the town walls, storks build their great nests of branches, often on the low roofs of cottages or shepherds' huts, on mosques or minarets, and it is said that storks used to come from Alexandria on the same day every year to build in some old towers which stood near the western ramparts, but the same couple only come once, during the first year of their adult life. Whether this be true or not, there are certainly storks to be seen in abundance, in their beautiful ordered flight across the

plains of Macedonia, standing picturesquely poised against the sky or in the fields, feeding their young on a minaret or swooping to the ground for food.

Though the paths and walks round the ramparts are untidy and dusty, the ancient gateways make a wonderful framework for the hills of Macedonia as they stretch into the distance, patterned with groups of fruit trees and cypress beneath a vast and radiant sky. From the old walls there is always something of interest to look at as well as the magnificent panorama. A football match is a most entertaining sight, for the Greeks play with a mixture of grace and swiftness and the general effect is of a dance rather than a game. Tough as the Greeks are, they move and leap and struggle for the ball with the easy movements of dancers. Donkeys stand around and mock them with their raucous braying, the donkeys which are the easiest means of transport up the steep slopes. Indeed, they are used a great deal in the narrow streets below where the atmosphere of a medieval town with street vendors and water-carriers persists. Goats are milked outside the houses where fruit barrows stop and goods are weighed on the spot. Donkey carts carry provisions and many of the smaller traders bring their wares to the door on a donkey's back. In a square where a mosque is used as a shop, grass and flowers sprout from its minute dome, and even a miniature tree flourishes in the dust and earth which has collected there. A cascade of deep red roses from a garden behind trails over its tiled roof. A fountain in the middle of the square stands beneath an immense tree which shades the women and girls who come to draw water here in the earthenware jars that have been used for centuries. Great baskets are piled with fruit and vegetables and canaries sing in cages. Old men stand about and chatter whilst the women get on with the work and donkeys trudge along the tortuous street.

Besides the old city and the colourful port, the residential quarter along the waterfront has its own charm. The houses are usually attractive bungalows with ample veranda space for sleeping out in summer. There is generally one large room out of which all the others open, so that during the hot weather when all doors and windows are open, there is a continual current of air. This is certainly a great boon when the temperature is high, but in winter, when an icy north wind blows off the mountains, it is extremely difficult to keep out the cold, and

most houses have cosy stoves, oil heaters, or better still, a very efficient system of oil central heating. Most of the villas are set in delightful gardens full of "old-fashioned" flowers, huge pink cabbage roses, wistaria and poppies, and the windows look over the sea. Along the shore, rather mournful-looking horses and donkeys stand patiently with their rather dilapidated carts. Silhouetted against the sunset sky, or materializing from the mist in the radiance of sunrise, and reflected in the wet fore-shore, they make a most romantic picture, breaking the long horizontal lines of sea and trailing cloud.

Less romantic is the unpleasant custom of leaving unwanted kittens to die on the shore. It is a common sight to see three or four tiny creatures, their eyes hardly open, floundering about before they starve to death. This is not an act of wanton cruelty. The Greeks hate taking life. They feel that if they leave the kittens out in the open, there is at least a chance, however slender, that they will survive, and oddly enough, some do, or are rescued.

We have always found Salonica an exciting and amusing town to stay in, but it also proves an excellent centre for seeing Macedonia. A great deal can be covered by day trips on the rather ancient buses, as well as by the modern coaches which, if not exactly comfortable, are always entertaining. The driver's seat is usually festooned with all kinds of devices against evil spirits, and there is often, too, an ikon with a lamp burning below it, or a coloured religious picture, cut from one of the weekly papers, surrounded by flowers. More often than not, there are fresh flowers in the holder and peacock's feathers, oddly enough thought to ward off ill luck, wave over the windscreen.

The only way to be sure of a seat is to book in advance, the best seats being allotted in order of booking, but for the late-comers who have forgotten to book, the conductor may well put up a camp stool in the gangway. The trip is certain to be a noisy one quite apart from the rattle of the bus, for the Greeks never stop talking, and are always interested in the life, history and personal habits of a stranger. Ignorance of Greek is no safeguard, for the Greeks are the best mimers in the world, and will soon establish some means of communication. If any passenger begins to sing, the rest of the journey will be a musical one—as far as the semi-Oriental songs sung in high-pitched

voices can be called musical—for all the passengers will join in in parts. After a few trips on these buses, one becomes immune to everything, and can forget the noise and discomfort, and enjoy exploring the countryside from a sitting position, even though the seat be a hard one.

A great variety of journeys can be taken, both east and west, through the little-known country of Macedonia. There is, for instance, the trident-shaped peninsula which juts into the Aegean Sea, to explore, including of course Mount Athos and its wonderful monasteries, open only to men, and the shores of the Gulf of Salonica along the east coast of western Macedonia and at the foot of Mount Olympus. Beyond the peninsula and beyond Mount Athos to the east is the southern coast of eastern Macedonia and Thrace. In this region there are several places which can easily be reached in a day, either by car or bus, where there is good bathing, but perhaps the most delightful of the shorter journeys is to Stavros, two hours by bus to the east of Salonica.

The road leads straight across the neck of the peninsula beside the two vast pale blue lakes of Koronia and Volvi which stretch nearly its whole width, almost turning it into an island. At the eastern end of the Lake of Volvi, the waters flow through a gorge into a beautiful fertile valley, so fresh and green that it is often called the Tempe of Macedonia and indeed, it has much in common with the famous Vale. Its beauty is enhanced by the contrast its fresh green makes with the countryside further east where there is a rather dull and monotonously barren coastline.

When he was a student at the school of Aristotle, Alexander the Great used to take his warm baths in the spring that runs across the valley. The ruins of the establishment can still be seen on a hillock near the spring. The main road runs on rather drearily for another sixty miles or so to the town of Kavalla, important chiefly for its flourishing tobacco and currant trade, but a small road leads for some two and a half miles down a side road to the village and beach of Stavros, which in the spring and early summer is a place of sheer enchantment. The small square and the colour-washed houses are unpretentious and simple enough, but when the verandas are pale blue with masses of trailing wistaria and the gardens filled with scarlet, crimson and pale pink roses, it is most attractive.

Tethered white goats graze in the rough grass under the plane trees. Blossoming fruit trees divided from the sea by only a narrow strip of sand, cast their petals on the gently moving water; black and white sheep graze peacefully amongst the scarlet and green fishing boats drawn up on the rough grass and geese and ducks waddle down to the lake-smooth sea. Across the bay, green and blue mountains slope to the opposite shore. It is an ideal place for bathing and boating, and for lying in the shade of the trees. A naturally shady beach is rather a rarity in Greece where so frequently ramshackle and unattractive shelters have to be provided, for protection from the sun is a necessity. There is an inn which can accommodate a few guests, but clean beds and friendly service can be found in the simple village houses. Although a regular bus from Salonica does the journey in about two hours, arriving at midday and returning after about three hours, we have never seen it crowded and the bus is used chiefly by the inhabitants during the working week.

From Salonica it is also easy to explore the eastern shores of Macedonia opposite the peninsula, and to bathe at one of the sandy beaches within sight of Mount Olympus.

To be rather more ambitious it is well worth while spending a night or two at Kastoria. By road, which is by far the most exciting way of getting there, it is nearly two hundred miles. It can be more easily reached by air in about one and a half hours by going to Kozani and then driving one and a half hours by bus, but the flight is apt to be a bumpy one. There are several ways of getting there by road, and by picking the days for the buses carefully it is possible to go by one route and return by another. By car, of course, there are any number of permutations.

The journey to Kastoria, which takes one almost directly due west from Salonica and very near to the Albanian border, is a most exciting one. It may be that our enjoyment was influenced by the fact that it was the first long bus journey we ever took in Macedonia, and it was spring with the almonds in blossom. Different in atmosphere as it is from Classical Greece, we still felt nearer to the gods in these wild mountain ranges than in any other region, and the countryside was more charged with magic and mystery. Shepherds, playing their pipes, stood silhouetted against a wonderful sky as we climbed the barren

mountains with their shrivelled trees and and caves in the rocks. Goats and sheep were searching the scrub for a blade of grass. We came to a dip in the heights and a vast purple snow-capped range appeared across the sunlit valley where masses of pink blossom covered the lower slopes. Here was a village of yellow stone cottages amongst pale poplars in their spring green, and the dark red earth was being ploughed by teams of cream oxen; there, a mountain village clinging precariously to the rough steep crags and looking, from a distance, completely inaccessible. The bus, however, reaches almost any village and negotiates the most terrifying corners and steep hills. However, the road to Kastoria is a good one and surfaced all the way, though it is only for those with good heads for heights, otherwise it is better to go by plane, for the highways by Edessa and Florina or Verroia and Kozani climb up to great altitudes.

It is as well to remember that identity cards or police permits may be needed for many of the journeys along these northern roads, as they run near the Iron Curtain frontiers.

The approach to the town of Kastoria is enchanting, for as the road runs gently downhill, the lake shines between two hills with the town tumbling down the hillside into the lake.

In the spring, the dark brown roofs make a wonderful contrast with the pink blossom and the rows of gaily coloured washing which seem to hang everywhere. Delicate poplars and willows grow down to the water's edge where odd-looking black boats are moored, boats which seem like clumsy attempts at gondolas, but snub-prowed and tub-like. Between the willows, fishing nets are hung to dry and from peach trees and poplars the lines of washing with scarlet blankets and striped rugs move gently in the breeze.

The town is actually built on a peninsula, joined by a narrow isthmus to the mainland and so it seems like an island in the middle of a lake. It is easy to get lost at first, as by walking downhill towards the lake one may arrive on the wrong shore and have to walk some way to reach the other side of the peninsula. Remember though, that the Albanian border is not very far away and restrictions make it unwise to go walking far afield without a permit. The police are always friendly but they do like the reassurance of some official permission for taking notes or photographs or even making a sketch. But it is not only the charm of a lakeside town that makes Kastoria so

delightful to stay in, for it has many other delights and there is plenty to see. It is a prosperous town, for although it no longer enjoys its great medieval importance as the chief outpost of western Macedonia, its fur trade still flourishes, and those not engaged in stitching skins are fishermen or merchants and used to travelling and contact with other countries.

During the Byzantine rule, the generals and officials who served here in the border town, built churches and chapels—in all there are more than seventy churches, most of them Byzantine—and later the wealthy merchants who traded, principally with Central Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, made their contribution of churches, but more particularly of splendid houses, many of which can still be visited though most of them have been modified to meet modern needs. They have a definite Macedonian style of architecture which we have come to think of as Turkish. Some have great wooden doorways in high white walls leading into courtyards, brilliant with flowers and overhung with wistaria which seems to grow better here than anywhere in Europe. In one such house an arcaded terrace is almost hidden with the wonderful blossom which trails about the overhanging balcony. A wide outside flight of stairs leads to the first floor and the enormous reception room reserved for great occasions such as weddings and name days, since name days are kept rather than birthdays in Greece. A wooden gallery on one side is for the musicians who play for the dancing, and a raised platform which runs under the big windows opening on to the lake is reserved for special guests. The ceiling of this vast room is decorated with patterns made from thin strips of wood gilded and painted in bright colours; the walls are wooden with plaster panels, gay with birds and flowers. A great lamp hangs low from the ceiling, and on either side of the entrance doorway, fierce lions are painted to protect the household from any harm that may come from the north or from the south. A small room, accessible through a solid wooden door, used to be reserved for the women, more particularly the unmarried girls, so that they could watch the festivities through the heavily latticed openings.

The whole atmosphere of this and many other houses is of sumptuous opulence and of very solid construction. The ground floor is often of stone and windowless, as it was needed

by the merchants as a warehouse. The upper storey is heavily timbered and overhanging in the medieval style. These dwellings on the border of the lake with their main balcony windows overlooking its wide waters, have dignity and great distinction.

Many of the churches have paintings and all of them are small, having served as family chapels for the wealthier merchants. Several of them had fallen into disuse and were suffering badly from exposure to the weather until recently, when they were restored and protected from damp. One very small one near the lake is surrounded by blossoming trees; goats and hens scratch around its open door. The darkness and mystery of its painted interior is relieved by the flicker of a lamp which illuminates its walls, deep green, red and brown, with illustrations of Bible stories.

The tall tower of a church, the Panaghia, stands out against the sky and is, incidentally, to be found in the grounds of a school. Enjoyable hours and even days can be spent in searching out these hidden buildings. A mile or two along the shores of the lake is the charming and peaceful monastery of Mavrotissa with its two ancient churches and its wide spreading plane trees.

Rather more than ten miles away, but it seems further for the road is a difficult one with very sharp turns, is the ancient picturesque little town of Veroia which is well worth a visit. It was once a flourishing Byzantine city and in gardens and backyards can still be found the miniature churches, recently repaired, where the Christians worshipped during the persecution. The massive houses, with lower walls of stone and overhanging timbered upper storeys, overhang the narrow flagged streets and make them rather dark and gloomy, but springs and cascades enliven the surroundings where the vegetation is pleasantly green and luxuriant.

For those making a short stay in western Macedonia, the only other town worth taking trouble to visit is Edessa, and this can be a stop on the return to Salonica from Kastoria, or the journey there and back is easily accomplished in a day by bus.

The architecture of Edessa is similar to that of Kastoria, but on a less massive scale.

Great cascades and waterfalls which rush down from the heights make it a place for trippers, so it is apt to be over-

crowded at holiday times. Some of the streets are waterways, formed by the River Vodas which flows through the town above the deep ravine of Tria-Potamia, and are overhung by the heavily timbered upper storeys of the ancient houses.

CHAPTER EIGHT

JANINA

JANINA can be approached in several ways; from Corfu by ferry to Igoumenitsa; by air, or road from Salonica or Athens. From Corfu a ferry goes to Igoumenitsa in under three hours, and from there a bus continues through magnificent scenery and over a wild mountain range. Along the Zitsa plateau there are wonderful views over the valley of the Thiamis which runs almost parallel to the road from its source until a few miles from the Ionian Sea. The road, which until recently was one of the most difficult in Greece and was, in fact, a rough and dangerous track with terrifying hairpin bends above precipices, has been reconstructed. Cars arriving by ferry can do the sixty miles through this dramatic countryside without discomfort.

From the Peloponnesus, Janina can be reached from Patras, first by ferry from Rion two miles to the east which crosses to Antirion and the Greek mainland. A spectacular drive leads through magnificent country, past the lakes and gulfs which break up the west coast of Greece as far as Arta and then inland to Janina. This road has also been completely modernized so that it is safe for motorists. Like the run from Igoumenitsa to Janina, it used to be approximately safe for those with strong enough heads and stomachs to take the Greek bus which combines the agility of a goat with the rattle of one of the earliest trams. Perhaps when we first took this trip seven years ago, the journey was more of an adventure; it is certainly much safer now and the glorious country can be enjoyed without the former heart-in-mouth terrors.

Once at Antirion, the route turns westwards along the southern coast of the mainland to Missolonghi.

The small town is charmingly situated in the recess of a picturesque lagoon with wide sandy beaches and shallow waters. Apart from its position it is not exciting and is far more interesting historically than architecturally. It is, of course,

renowned for its associations with Byron and its heroic struggles against the Turks.

The story of the poet's tragic end in this obscure little town has been told often enough, but for the sake of convenience its main outlines are related here. It has in a sense some elements of fatality of the Greek drama and Byron himself was conscious of it, for when he set out on his last expedition he told his friends that he was sure he would never return and that he would soon die. Doubtless, with his usual sense of the theatrical, he visualized that he would be killed, sword in hand, leading a Greek army to victory and freedom. In any case he had cremated the body of Shelley in 1823 on the beach at Viareggio, he was growing prematurely old, life in Italy had become wearisome and his daughter Aurora had died in the convent of Bagna Cavallo tragically and unexpectedly. He felt disillusioned and ill, though for a moment he was revived by the sense of adventure when he landed on the Island of Cephalonia on August 3rd, 1823, with the purpose of examining from nearby the real state of affairs in Greece, for the London Committee of Britons who sought to help the Greeks to attain their freedom. After a long period of waiting he received an invitation to go to Missolonghi to co-operate with Prince Mavrogordato in the defence and liberation of western Greece.

Unbelievably his ship took well over a week to do this short journey, for there were Turkish cruisers to be avoided and the Ottoman forces were still in Patras.

Although the different sections of the Army of Liberation were at loggerheads, he was welcomed with riotous joy. The populace believed that this immensely wealthy nobleman would undoubtedly drive away the Turks and relieve their extreme poverty. Then as now, Missolonghi was on the edge of a lagoon of stagnant water, but years of misrule and apathy had left the population on the brink of starvation and there was overcrowding because of refugees from Turkish oppression and of the Suliots partisans who had come to fight the Turks and if possible collect some plunder.

Byron, with the remains of his good looks, his gold-spangled tunics of green or scarlet, his plumed helmets or shakos, did indeed arouse the greatest admiration, but this did not prevent the various factions from fighting and there were open battles between the Suliots and the inhabitants. Then to complicate

matters still further, the sailors of the small but potentially effective fleet manned by islanders from Spetsae, Poros and Hydra had not been paid and were not prepared to go into action until arrears had been made up.

However most of these troubles might have been cleared up if the weather had not made action on land well-nigh impossible, for the roads and low-lying meadows were flooded because of the constant torrential rains. Byron's health began to fail, but he was not the only one to suffer, for several of the technicians from Western Europe that accompanied him fell ill and others were disinclined to action and were apt to be mutinous.

The poet himself collapsed after catching a severe chill brought about by riding in the rain. Conceivably he might have recovered but constant blood-letting and a surfeit of strong medicines of different kinds certainly hastened his death in April 1824. Despite a life full of events, emotions and movement he was only thirty-six years old.

His remains were taken for burial in the church of Hucknall-Torkard, for the authorities would not allow his ashes to be interred in Westminster Abbey. His heart, aptly enough, was placed in a tomb at Missolonghi, in the land of Greece which he had loved so much and continued to love to the moment of his death.

Northwards, the road runs along the shore and then goes through the glorious ravine of Klissourato Pass and between two more lakes before reaching Agrinion, which was almost entirely rebuilt after the earthquake of 1887. It is a desolate-looking, uninteresting town, though it is the largest of the region and the centre of a big tobacco-producing area. Northward again from Agrinion, the road climbs a low ridge of mountains from which the towering peaks of the Pindus are visible to the east, and then it descends to run along the borders of Lake Amvrakia which it crosses at its narrow northern end. Amphilioha lies on the shores of the almost completely land-locked Gulf of Arta which dips deeply into the coast; Preveza is far away to the west guarding its narrow channel to the Ionian Sea. The road runs more or less parallel to the eastern shores of the bay and then through a wonderfully fertile plain, before arriving at Arta with its magnificent thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Byzantine churches, the finest of which is

the splendid Panaghia Parigoritissa, with its monumental mosaic of the Pantokrator in the dome, its Italian-style sculpture and its unusual construction.

The modern driver no longer crosses the picturesque Turkish Bridge of Arta whose nine semicircular arches sweep boldly over the River Arachthus, for now it is only considered strong enough to carry foot passengers. Other traffic crosses by an iron bridge which spoils the view of the romantic-looking ancient structure. Legend tells us that the builders could not finish the last span, for every night a demon came and destroyed it or the waters of the river flushed it away. Then a raven brought a message that if the builder sacrificed his wife by burying her in the river bed, the work would proceed successfully. Apparently the dearly-loved wife of the master builder was treacherously tricked into jumping into the river. Her husband threw her wedding ring into the waters and said that if she loved him she would retrieve it. As she climbed down the bank, the workmen stoned her to death and buried her beneath the arch. The next night the bridge stood firm and the work was completed. There are many variations in song and verse of this unpleasant story, but the bridge itself has no sinister atmosphere. It adds great charm to Arta and so do the giant plane trees nearby and the surrounding orchards of lemon and orange.

From Arta northwards again to Janina, the country is wild and mountainous, with deep ravines, but it is not barren. All kinds of trees grow in profusion, and the valleys are very green. It is sparsely inhabited and villages are few and very far between. Occasionally, reed and straw huts like round haystacks are grouped together, or little huts built of rubble advertise the existence of shepherds. The whole countryside is on a very grand scale. Even where it is wooded, there are no soft contours, but a rugged grandeur. The highest point is reached at Chani Avgou, a little less than 2,000 ft. above sea level, and then the road dips down to Janina, still 1,000 ft. above the sea, but set in a hollow in the range of mountains on the shores of the Lake of Pamvotis. It is surrounded by the marshy land where goats and sheep find plenty of pasture and great kites and vultures circle overhead and storks build nests in the minarets or sweep across the rain-drenched sky.

The town of Janina, capital of Epirus, is mainly Eastern in

atmosphere, for it was the capital of Ali Pasha during the eighteenth century. It is a strange, haunted city on its lake reputed to contain sea serpents and all manner of strange creatures. There is no doubt that it is teeming with fish, and very good fish indeed, and that it has floating islands of weeds. Romantic and picturesque, its setting is fit for the Arabian Nights, with minarets and mosques, reeds, poplar and great plane trees. Heavily built women in purple or black walk slowly along the lake shore, or sit in rows on benches outside the half-timbered houses, where they can be protected from the sun by the overhanging upper floor and watch the fishermen tend their nets amongst the boats swaying against the banks.

The old part of the town, largely restored in the early nineteenth century, still has its Eastern type of bazaar, its streets of silversmiths and coppersmiths and its antique shops, as well as stalls of fruit and vegetables. In the early morning, the old city walls and gateways are brilliant with the exotic colours of the local produce. At night, when the flares are lighted, this ancient quarter presents a lively and colourful scene, especially as the inhabitants spend much of the evening strolling about and talking, some of them, though this habit is disappearing, in their local dress. An old woman sits on an upturned box, a goat or a kid tethered beside her, or perhaps a group of scruffy chickens scratch around. Here and there huge trees spread their branches over the stalls, and brilliant flowers spill over from the balconies of the flanking houses. On the roof tops, storks build their great nests of branches or stand like sentinels on a chimney top or tower. The older streets slope down to the lake with its restaurants and cafés which are very popular in summer. Even during the busy season, the lake has a feeling of magic. All manner of strange birds congregate in the marshes. The fertile valley yields excellent crops of fruit and grain and vines which produce the good Zitsa wine. Fish of all kinds are abundant and it is pleasant on a summer evening to row over to the delightful island with its white-washed houses and blossoming gardens and dine at the inn under the plane trees. It was to this island that the tyrant, Ali Pasha, retired when Janina fell after a long siege and it was here that he was treacherously murdered by Ottoman troops in 1822.

This island is associated with Ali Pasha, possibly the most

extraordinary personage to feature in the annals of modern history. Born in Albania in 1741, his father was the hereditary chieftain of an obscure village, an office which carried the Turkish title of Bey, implying therefore a certain degree of responsibility to the government in Constantinople. However, communications were bad, the distance from the capital was great, and so in this region, just as in many other parts of the Ottoman Empire, local officials were virtually independent of the central administration, for their principal function was to collect taxes and tribute by methods of their own choice, with as much profit as they could make for themselves.

In Albania, feuds and fighting between the different clans went on incessantly, and so it happened that Ali's father was killed in a skirmish and that his office and lands were seized by a neighbouring chieftain. Since he was driven away from his home and forced to take refuge in the mountains, it is scarcely astonishing that the boy was trained to carry on a vendetta against his father's murderers, and that his mother became the leader of a gang of brigands that subsisted on plunder. After years of raids and forays, Ali succeeded his mother as head of the bandits, and eventually he not only returned to his native village and took possession of it, but he executed the chieftain who had murdered his father. So ruthless had Ali become that he caused his mother to be imprisoned on a trumped-up charge, and it has even been suggested that he killed one of his brothers so as to have no further rivals to compete with him.

In spite of his past, the Turkish authorities confirmed the ex-brigand's claim to hold office as Bey of the region, after he had given proof of his loyalty to them by attacking and killing two neighbouring pashas who had been in open rebellion against the central government. As a reward, Ali not only received the estates of his ancestors, but also those of the officials that he had just liquidated. Nevertheless he continued to keep contact with his former associates and enriched himself by sharing in the proceeds of their brigandage in return for his "protection", but at the same time he remained in favour in Constantinople by bribing all the right court officials very lavishly and by sending in his quota of taxes and tribute with great regularity. Eventually he was made governor-general of Rumelia, a district which included Epirus, the part of Mace-

donia which forms the south of Yugoslavia and the whole of the present state of Albania.

Since the pashas nominally under his authority were virtually independent, Ali set out to dispose of them in turn, sometimes overwhelming them by direct attack with the troops under his command, but more often removing them by guile. So in the case of Janina, he invited the pasha to a banquet and after he had successfully poisoned his guest, he applied to Constantinople for his succession and was granted it without delay.

In this manner Ali became an independent ruler, having as his empire most of Epirus, Albania, western Macedonia and the greater part of Greece except for the islands, Thrace, Attica and eastern Macedonia. In Epirus, a strip of coast opposite the Ionian Islands, and in the mountains immediately behind it, the Suliots, a small Christian community, defended themselves from all attacks on their strongholds until 1803 when they were forced to withdraw to Parga by the overwhelming forces of Ali Pasha. Parga had recently been abandoned by the Venetians when Napoleon seized their metropolis and many of their territories in the Adriatic. Parga, with its solid fortifications, was easily held with the aid of the French, first of all, and after 1814, with the help of a British contingent. In 1817, the British allowed Ali to take over this town, on condition that he gave the Suliots adequate compensation and allowed them to depart and take refuge on the Ionian Islands. A few years later, some of these same Suliots took an active part in the War of Liberation and Byron recruited his personal bodyguard from men of this race who had settled in Cephalonia.

Astonishingly enough, Ali's rule brought prosperity to Epirus, for he built roads and bridges and for many years he enforced peace among the unruly tribesmen by the most brutal methods. Robbers were tortured and burnt alive, rebellious villages were sacked and their populations massacred, but the Pasha maintained that kid-glove methods were useless in the Balkans. There must have been something to be said for this contention, for he was much-loved by the peasants who cherished his memory for many years after his death, which was a violent one. Though he was illiterate, he was a first-rate administrator, an able diplomat and his knowledge of foreign

affairs was outstanding, probably because he knew how to pick his advisers, most of whom were Greek, French or Italian renegades.

However, he suspected nearly everybody, including members of his own family, for he killed at least two of his sons, one of them just simply because he wished to kidnap his mistress.

At last, the Sultan began to grow weary of this pasha who was threatening to detach too large a part of his empire and was growing strong enough to defy him. In 1821 an army of 50,000 men was sent to attack the stronghold of Janina, but the old man withdrew on to the island of the lake and it was eighteen months before he was forced to plead for terms. Whilst the conditions of surrender were being discussed, the Ottoman envoy suddenly stabbed Ali in the back, and later, the old man's head was displayed in Janina and in Constantinople. Nevertheless he had had a good run for his money, for he was eighty-one years old when he died, and for nearly fifty years he had terrorized Epirus, Albania and the greater part of Macedonia.

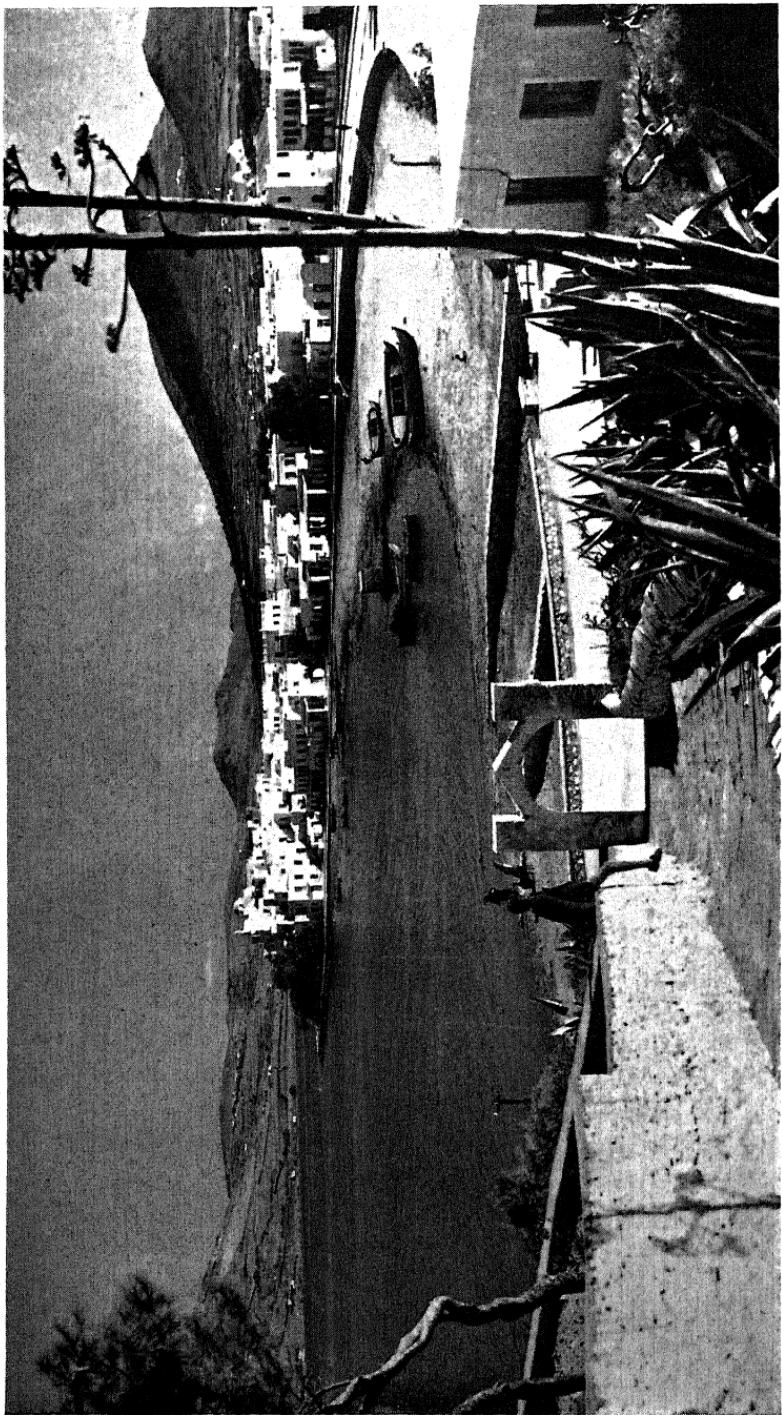
Janina, like Kastoria in Macedonia, is surrounded on three sides by the lake, in fact it seems to break into the waters with its headland of rock and its picturesque mosque, now a museum. In winter, the water can be very rough and the wild landscape which surrounds it makes a dramatic setting for the rock which looks like a huge ship in a stormy sea. Indeed, the climate is very variable and can be extremely hot as well as bitterly cold. It rains a great deal, and in the mists of autumn the whole lake is wrapped in mystery. The island becomes an intriguing blur in the centre of the lake and the beautiful poplars on the banks change from near black to a soft grey-green. It seems as though almost anything could happen on these wild shores, until the sun comes out again and transforms the whole scene into a friendly and picturesque countryside.

There are several monasteries on the island, the oldest being that of Ayios Nikolaos Diliros, founded in the eleventh century, but as elsewhere in Janina, much restoration has been carried out here.

There is nothing of really outstanding interest in Janina save its strange enchantment and its superb setting, its



The Lion Gate, Mycenae



Paros

Albanian-Turkish atmosphere and its violent changes of light and weather.

From Janina there are many places of interest within easy reach especially for a good walker. Only a few miles away is the astonishing cavern of Perama, one of the most beautiful stalactite caves in Europe, discovered during the Second World War, when the local inhabitants were trying to find shelter in air raids.

About thirteen miles away to the south in a small valley lies Dodona, the seat of Greece's most ancient and venerated oracle dedicated to Zeus. Here the whispering leaves of an oak tree, the soft cooing of doves, the trickle of a fountain or, in contrast, the clanging of brass, foretold the future. The Goths destroyed the town in the sixth century A.D., and all that is to be seen today are the ruins of the temple of Zeus and the theatre where, in Roman times, gladiators fought bulls and wild boar, but which is now being restored to its original use as a theatre by presenting classical plays during the summer.

There are excursions on Sundays from Janina to Metsova, the picturesque town at the pass through the great Pindus range, more than 3,600 ft. above sea level. Here the girls dance in their lovely costumes in the square. It is some thirty-five miles from Janina, but the road is steep and very winding, so only those with strong heads and stomachs should take the trip, yet it is worth almost any effort, for the drive is one of the most superb in Greece. The scenery is very wild, desolate and forbidding, but it can be a journey of sheer enchantment, especially in spring when the snow still covers much of the mountain side. Fir trees grow on its abrupt slopes and their dark shadows make strange eerie patterns on the snow. It is always cold on the heights of the Pindus range and there is an icy silence. Even the branches of the pines seem to move in the wind without creaking and, on the heights near the pass, their trunks are swathed in mist as they rise up like dark ghosts from the snow. If the weather is good, the whole range is transformed from wild desolation, dramatic ravines and precipices, into an astonishing fairyland of violet shadows, silvery mist and powderings of snow. The glorious silver light of Greece flickers over the mountains as they stand out against an almost emerald sky.

Autumn is perhaps the most dramatic season in Epirus. At

that time fierce storms alternate with bright sunshine and the swollen streams rush headlong down its narrow valleys or cascade over its steep cliffss. Winds rage over the black peaks and thunder rolls and echoes, the whole scene is lighted up in splendour by flashes of lightning. When the rainstorms calm and the clouds part, a passing blaze of sunlight illuminates the grandeur of the scene, bronze and golden and copper colour against a patch of clear blue sky.

Metsova itself is a picturesque little town with its houses clinging precariously to the mountain side.

It is a wonderful journey to follow the road, either by car or in the bus which runs every day from Janina to Trikala, through Kalabaka to the plain of Thessaly and on to Larissa, from which it is easy to get a fast train either to Thessaloniki or Athens.

Originally the great plain of Thessaly was bounded to the west by the vast dramatic range of the Pindus, to the south by Othrys and to the east by Olympus, Pelion and Ossa. These mountains once surrounded an immense inland sea which divided into two lakes and eventually forced its way through a gorge into the sea. Now the great plain is crossed by the river Peneus and its many branches which spread out fan-like across the fertile land. It is a glorious sight as the road winds down from the mountains to see the great snow-capped mass of Olympus shining white against the sky; to the south-west, flat land stretches out to Larissa and the river, from its source in the Pindus, rushes out through the meadows and woods of Tempe to the Aegean Sea. Below, the strange grotesque rocks of Meteora come into sight like petrified prehistoric monsters. The road from Kalabaka has recently been extended right to the foot of the rocks, so there is no need to undertake the rather arduous but very lovely walk along the steep and rough paths.

It seems impossible that anything could have been built on the summits of these perpendicular rocks, but during the eleventh or twelfth century, individual hermits established themselves here, probably in rough huts after scaling the rock face. These hermits were later joined by others until, in the sixteenth century, there were fourteen monasteries, all of them with fine libraries. Eventually all twenty-five peaks were crowned with retreats. During the last few centuries the monasteries have declined; many have been deserted and have

almost crumbled away, or been swept away by the weather. Most of those that remain are in ruins, save five which are inhabited and which the government intend to preserve either as monasteries or, presumably, if the ageing monks who look after them die, as museums.

The following instructions for the ascent in *Murrays Handbook to Greece* published in 1896 are more entertaining to read than to follow:

"On arriving at the foot of the monastery (Metecron), where the most perfect stillness and apparent absence of all life habitually reign, the guides shout to attract attention, while the traveller gazes up in wonder at the vertical cliffs above. He sees nothing but a smooth wall of rock, far loftier in appearance than its measured height, with a species of shed or covered platform upon its summit, from which the end of a rope is dangling. To the right, where the face of the cliff is slightly broken, a series of ladders, made in several separate joints, are let down from the mouths of artificial tunnels in the rock, which communicate with the lower parts of the buildings. At night they are pulled up and the monks are entirely isolated from the world below. The ladders are perfectly vertical and swing backwards and forwards in the air with the least breath of wind. A monk mounting by one of them looks from below like a large black fly crawling on the face of the precipice.

"The first response from the covered platform is usually a challenge to mount by the ladder—which nobody but a sailor or a man with exceptionally firm grip and steady head, should venture to do. When, however, the monks have realized that it is a bona-fide traveller who seeks admission, they make no difficulty about letting down the rope, which is worked from above by a windlass and pulley. The rope is as thick as a man's wrist, and terminates in a huge iron hook, upon which a net is loosely hung. The guides detach the net and spread it on the ground, the traveller sits in the middle of it, the border meshes are gathered up one by one and hitched upon the hook, and a shout from below announces that all is ready. A gentle upward motion then begins, the net twists slowly round and round, the traveller, as the sides of his cage contract, is gently shaken into a ball,

and, except for a strange sensation of absolute helplessness, the ascent is not otherwise than agreeable. On reaching the level of the platform the net is fished in by means of a hooked pole, its inmate, still rolled up in a ball, is tumbled upon the floor, the meshes are detached from the hook and the traveller is set free. After shaking hands with his hosts and drinking a cup of coffee, he sees whatever the monks have to show him, leaves two or three drachmae as a complimentary fee, sits down once more in the middle of the net, and is gently pushed over the precipice into the air. The pole attached to the windlass is carefully turned by three or four monks or servants and there is no suspicion of danger."

Happily the net and pulley idea is now reserved for hauling up provisions and the extremely dangerous series of vertical ladders are no longer used. Steps have been cut in the rock during the 1920s and the ascent is breath-taking rather than adventurous.

Of the few remaining monasteries, the Great Meteoron, St. Vaarlam, St. Stephen, Ayia Trias, Ipsiloters, now deserted, where the monks used to illuminate manuscripts and the Convent of Ayia Rosani, are all well worth visiting, but for anyone with limited time, it is best to choose either the Great Meteoron, St. Stephen or St. Vaarlam or Ayia Trias.

Of these, the best is the Meteoron, as it has a beautiful sixteenth-century church of the Transfiguration with lovely frescoes of the life of Christ, and it combines with this a wonderful view over the plain to the Pindus. In spring, from the garden brilliant with roses, geraniums and lilies, across the valley of olives and blossoming trees, the Pindus mountains can be seen, still tipped with snow.

There is something very sad about this decaying building, with its aged monks, numbering only three, though there were originally three hundred, and the vast empty storerooms, the great refectory, and the enormous wine casks, no longer in use.

For a longer stay, St. Stephen's is the most comfortable of the retreats, for there are rooms for visitors and meals are provided. It also commands a magnificent view, but it is separated from the main peak by a ravine and has to be crossed by a narrow bridge which is presumably quite safe, but not pleasant for those inclined to vertigo.

CHAPTER NINE

CORFU

CONSIDERING its accessibility, we have always been surprised to find how unspoilt Corfu has remained, and this, despite the fact that it is more urbane than any of the other islands of Greece. If you wish to find the aura of Classical times, you must go to the Cyclades, to Aegina or Crete. The seven Ionian Islands (Corfu, Paxos, Ithaca, Lefkas, Cephalonia, Zante and Zerigo) are on the way to the Adriatic coast of Italy. They were occupied for so many years by the Venetians, that they have a character of their own, which has been accentuated by forty-seven years as a British Protectorate.

These islands have vestiges of feudalism, for they have an aristocracy, large estates and country houses, though admittedly some of the estates are being broken up, some of the country houses are being divided up, and a few of the nobility have gone into commerce.

These features are not to be found on the mainland, probably because of the centuries of Turkish domination. When the Ottoman armies occupied Greece, all those who could possibly do so left the country and settled in southern Italy which their ancestors had colonized so many centuries before. Some thousands of Albanians crossed the Adriatic as displaced persons, and many of their descendants have preserved their language, their religion and even their national dress. Altogether there are more than eighty of these Albanian villages in southern Italy and Sicily.

In the present day, Corfu is used as a port of call by ships sailing from Brindisi to Athens, and by some of the services from Venice to Greece and the Middle East; there are also daily flights from Athens to the island, and frequent flights from Brindisi. By the time this book is in print, the aerodrome of Corfu will have been enlarged so that it can be used by large planes like the Comet, Caravelle, Douglas DC 8, and this may increase the movement of tourists very considerably.

However, the authorities in Corfu are displaying unusual

wisdom for they wish to avoid large crowds, block-booking of hotel rooms and excessive commercialization. They believe that the best course for them is to build small hotels in selected places, and to restrict the amount of accommodation available in each of the small bays that are being developed. In other words, they want to have a number of individual visitors rather than crowds of mass-produced tourists.

We can only hope that they will be successful in their ambition. Our last visit to Corfu was made very agreeably by sea for we felt that nothing could be more restful than a journey of thirty-six hours through the Bay of Athens, the Gulf of Corinth and weaving in and out of the Ionian Islands.

We were delighted to find ourselves in an old-fashioned ship that must have plied originally between Southampton and Havre or across the Irish Channel, in fact it seemed vaguely familiar, evoking memories of childhood trips to France many, far too many, years ago. Indeed for real comfort, there is nothing like these boats built in the reign of Edward VII. Deep in the water, they are perfectly steady in a rough sea, the cabins are spacious and the massive teak fittings give a feeling of opulence and solidity like a well-kept Victorian house.

Our fellow passengers in the First Class were either Greeks going to Corfu for a long week-end, or foreigners belonging to the rapidly diminishing class of individualists, people who are prepared to pay more in order to do precisely what they want without being marshalled about in groups. British, Americans, Germans or French, they had this feature in common that they were ready to battle against the herd instinct. However, to travel in this manner now, it is necessary to have time, and to be able to choose the time for your journey. In the height of the tourist season, it is impossible for an individual to find a room in the majority of hotels in Europe, and this, strange to say, applies more to the expensive establishments than to the cheaper ones.

It is no use carping too much at the system of block-booking, and package holidays, for without them the majority of the people who travel would not be able to travel at all. However it is true also to say that the easier travel is made the less the traveller is able to see of the countries that he is visiting, and the less these countries become worth visiting.

France will always be popular because the French insist on keeping to their own way of life irrespective of the wishes of their foreign visitors who in the end are fascinated by it. In most other countries the food and the hotels tend to be standardized so that meals and rooms are becoming exactly the same wherever you may go, and this applies to prices and to most commodities.

Fortunately our ship had not been submitted to this process to any great extent. Harry, our steward, had indeed worked for seven years in the United States, but his allegiance was divided between Cephalonia where he was born and Piraeus where he lived. His care of us was affectionate and uncalculating in the manner that is typical of provincial Greece. Physically he looked Irish, which is perhaps scarcely surprising, since many of the soldiers of the British garrison married local girls during the Protectorate of the Ionian Islands.

In the saloon, the Mayor of Corfu, slim, grey-haired and wearing a well-cut grey suit, looked very much like a prosperous family solicitor from a West Country town in England, whilst his beautiful daughter was the double of a charming London debutante whom we know very well.

Then as it happened, one of our Athens friends was also on board, a highly intelligent man with the cosmopolitan education which is characteristic of business circles in Greece. After some years at the Sorbonne, and the Sciences Politiques in Paris, he went on to the London School of Economics, and finally qualified as a lawyer in his own country.

The modern Greek is intensely patriotic, but unlike the citizens of most small countries, he has the universal outlook that would seem more natural in the representative of a world power. However, the influence of Greece is out of all proportion to its size, particularly in commerce and in finance, and in every great capital there are Greek communities which are highly respected.

Like the Athenians of old, the Greeks feel that the sea is their kingdom, and that they must survive and expand by it.

The changes of the past fifty years have not been confined to liberating irredentist lands. Good roads are being built, land is being drained, and Athens has been given all the attributes of a great metropolis. In the early twenties goats still grazed in the fields where Kolonaki Square was laid out, and this is now

the hub of a fashionable quarter only a few minutes drive from Constitution Square.

Some of us may miss the Arcadian simplicity of the past, but it is probable that the process of modernization and expansion brings with it an increased standard of living.

As we sat in comfort in our canvas chairs, the tinkling sound of a guitar reached our ears. We went down to the Third Class deck to see what was happening. There were peasants on the way to the islands, and many of the women were wearing regional costumes, there were men asleep on the hard boards, and others playing cards. Families grouped around baskets were eating the hard-boiled eggs and bread which seem to be the staple diet in the country. There were also young Americans, Britons and Germans who were mingling on friendly terms with the Greek passengers.

The essentials for this kind of travel are a "Li-Lo" and plenty of food and drink, and fine weather. In the winter however, there is far more space for there are fewer passengers, and judicious negotiations with a steward may produce all sorts of unexpected privileges. Be that as it may, the Greeks of the working-class and of the countryside are friendly, courteous and tactful. In buses, ships, or trains they will do everything to make foreigners feel at ease, for they have a natural distinction of behaviour and unusual sense of hospitality.

Later on in the evening, some men started dancing below decks, but they were doing it more for their own pleasure than to entertain their fellow passengers. As so often happens in Greece, women did not participate in this performance, which was so acrobatic and so strenuous that only very young and athletic girls could have attempted to join in.

Graceful, joyous and full of movement, dancing of this kind must play at least as great a part in the development of character as cricket. In this case there must be perfect co-ordination and teamwork, a high standard of fitness, and sound timing. There is a good case for introducing Greek dancing into our schools instead of cricket and football, but it is hard to imagine what a demonstration by the average games master would be like.

The afternoon passed quickly enough, for the shores of the Gulf of Corinth possess a beauty of which one cannot grow weary. The mountains on either side are full of mystery, a

mystery conferred as much by the clear light and wonderful colouring as by the magic legends and history of the past. Obviously this lovely setting was the essential foundation of Greek mythology and Greek culture. Where else could the gods have lived but on Mount Olympus, and who can look at Parnassus without imagining that it must be the home of the Muses? How would Homer have written if he had spent his life in the Forest of Arden?

The great civilizations of the past have always coincided with periods of unusual prosperity and economic ease. The Greece of Pericles could comfortably feed and support the small population of the time, and the Greeks were enriched by trade, and the fortunate discovery of the silver mines near Sunion.

We arrived at Patras towards midnight, and for a while we stood on deck watching the lights of towns strung out on the northern shore. In the harbour the illuminations of a warship were reflected on the surface of the dark and satiny water. After the usual preliminaries, crowds hurried out of the steerage to join friends on the dockside, and a few business men walked down the gangway and hurried away in cars or taxis. The night life of Patras is gayer and less inhibited than the night life of Athens, and we were told that many of the expense account boys like to come here for the week-end, returning by train to their offices early on Monday morning.

Two or three hours later, we landed passengers at Cephallonia, and peeping out of the porthole, had a brief vision of mountains flooded with moonlight.

In the morning we sailed in the straits, with the mountains of Epirus and Albania on our right, and the coast of Corfu on our left. The water was a rippling, flashing sheet of dazzling silver whilst the mountain slopes were still purple in the shadows.

Soon the headland of the city of Corfu came into sight, a patchwork of grey, green, and white formed by the walls of the citadel, the trees and the houses. The hills in the background were green, like the avenue that follows the curve of the bay with its fringe of yellow sand.

Kerkyra, Corcyra, the other names for Corfu were given to it by the Corinthians, who colonized it in the eighth century B.C., because it is shaped like a sickle. The settlers prospered so

much that they soon became independent and even waged war on the Corinthians.

When the Roman Empire was divided up, the Ionian Islands remained under the rule of Byzantium until 1205 when they were annexed by the Venetians, who kept them for six centuries in spite of repeated attacks by the Turks after the fall of Constantinople.

From 1807 to 1814 Corfu was occupied by the French, and the Imperial troops successfully repelled the onslaughts of the British fleet until they were forced to surrender owing to lack of food and supplies.

In 1815 the mainland of Greece was still groaning under the tyranny of the Turks, and it was doubtless for this reason that the Ionian Archipelago was turned into a British Protectorate. As the Republic of Venice had been swallowed up by Austria, the Ottoman Empire was considered to be capable of aggression and of invading the islands.

A fair measure of self government was granted, but after the War of Independence the Corfiotes became restless and wished to be joined to their Fatherland. After a certain amount of delay, the British gave way, and the islands became part of the Kingdom of Greece in 1862.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, and the first years of the twentieth century, Corfu was a select and highly aristocratic resort, well known because most foreign visitors to Greece travelled overland to Brindisi or Trieste and then continued their journey by sea.

Since there were few hotels, the British who came for the winter rented or bought country houses. A British chaplain held services throughout the year, and there was a small British Club, though the British continued to take an active part in the social life of the island, just as they did under the Protectorate.

In the eighties, the Empress Elizabeth of Austria commissioned an Italian architect to build a large villa at Gastouri, six miles to the south of the capital. When she was murdered shortly after its completion, the mansion was bought by William II, Emperor of Germany.

During the Second World War, Corfu was occupied, first of all by the Italians, and then, after 1943, by the Germans, and once again the British arrived with armies of liberation.

In 1915 when Serbia was overrun by the Austrians, the Serbian Army Headquarters were transferred to Corfu, which served as a base for operations on the mainland.

Apart from an unfortunate "incident" after the First World War, when Mussolini ordered the Italian Fleet to bomb Corfu as a reprisal for the alleged murder of an Italian official on the frontiers of Albania, the islands have not figured importantly in the history of our time. The British intervened to prevent further action by the Fascist Government, a fact which has been forgotten by nearly everybody, though it is in keeping with our long tradition of supporting Greece against outside aggression.

The results of this strange past are easily noticeable, even in the course of a short stay. In the Ionian Islands, there are no signs of the Oriental influence because they were never occupied for any length of time by the Turks, and they never lost contact with Western Europe.

Until quite recently, a modified form of feudalism existed as more prominent Corfiotes owned large estates, and lived in large villas not unlike the Georgian manor houses of England. Most educated people speak Italian, and until fifty or sixty years ago most of the town dwellers were bi-lingual.

Gastronomically, the cuisine is partly Italian, partly Greek but the British régime popularized ginger-beer (*tzintzibirra*), currant cake (*kek*), and chutney, but here the chutney is made with tomatoes and eaten with turkey at Christmas time.

Architecturally, the Venetians, the French and the British divide the honours. The Lion of St. Mark still adorns fortifications of the Venetian period, and there are a number of Italian palaces in the town of Corfu, besides the villas of the aristocracy in the countryside.

The French built five or six arcaded streets in the city, but do not seem to have had much contact with the Greek population.

From the town-planning point of view, the British were at their best here, and in the other Ionian islands. They constructed some good roads, laid on water, and attempted, with some success, to give Corfu the attributes of the capital of a small sovereign state.

On landing we took a horse cab so as to be able to enjoy the attractions of this charming town, and to see how much the disastrous bomb damage of the war had been repaired. Some

buildings were, of course, irreplaceable, in particular the library of 40,000 books founded by the British, and containing invaluable records of the history of Corfu, and especially of the Protectorate. Jogging along the waterfront, we looked out at an American warship anchored in the bay, and we gazed at the lovely mountains of the mainland.

On nearing the Hotel Astir, the road begins to climb and to curve inland to the Plateia or Esplanade which is the real hub of the city. Next to the hotel is an unpretentious house where the painter Edward Lear spent a winter. The tireless little man was an epileptic and suffered from chronic malaria, but this did not prevent him from travelling all over the world and putting up with fearful hardships in countries like Calabria or the remoter corners of India. The Venetian palace next to his lodgings was the home of Capodistria, hero of the War of Independence, and first Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Greece.

A remote ancestor of his was shipwrecked in Corfu early in the thirteenth century, but his descendants prospered and were ennobled by the Venetians.

Adjoining this palace is a mansion with a colonnaded façade with superimposed terraces in the northern Italian style which is very much like one of Nash's houses in Regent's Park, not only in structure, but because it is built of stucco.

Three hundred yards further on the Royal Palace came into view. It was erected in the early years of the nineteenth century to serve as residence and seat of government for the British Commissioner, Sir Thomas Maitland. This rather eccentric gentleman was known as King Tom because of his autocratic ways, but he does not seem to have been nearly as unpopular with the Greeks as some people have suggested, for he established a system of administration that prevailed during the first half of the Protectorate.

The islanders had their own flag, their own Senate, and their religious ceremonies were treated with the greatest respect, for the British troops participated in the processions of the Feast of St. Spiridon, and the officers carried lighted candles in the cortège.

Sir Frederick Adams, the next High Commissioner, was better liked, for he was married to a Corfiote lady, and had a real love for Corfu though his wife was currently reported to

cuckold him in a very big way. If the islanders criticized his love of display, they also admired him for it, and they enjoyed the public festivities that were constantly given in his honour.

Lord Nugent, who succeeded him, was an attractive personality who had a real love and understanding of the Greeks—he helped to develop the new university, and encouraged and fostered the intellectual life of the islanders in the short spell of his term of office.

Sir Ward Douglas was less of an idealist but a more practical administrator, occupying himself with the founding of schools, hospitals and model prisons. He founded the Ionian Bank, and drew up a revised code of laws.

The last years of the Protectorate were conspicuous for the increasing agitation among the islanders to join the Kingdom of Greece. The transfer was accomplished eventually in a perfectly harmonious manner, but there had been some unfortunate repression in previous years. Incidentally, it is interesting to note that the British Government had refused to sanction the change of administration until the highly unpopular German King Otho had been forced to abdicate by his subjects.

The British departed, but the memory of the Protectorate will be perpetuated by their monuments. The Palace, for instance, is an astonishingly sound piece of architecture, even though it was designed by Whitmore who was only a military engineer. Superbly sited facing the esplanade on one side and the port on the other, it has flanking pavilions, and a long colonnaded terrace supported on Doric pillars.

To the west, an arcaded block of buildings, like the rue de Rivoli, juts out at right angles to the Palace, for this part of the plan was laid out by the French.

The broad esplanade was designed to serve as a parade ground and park for the citizens of Corfu, and so in places there are statues of High Commissioners, and even an admirable little round Doric temple also designed by Whitmore.

Shortly after our arrival we sat at one of the café tables and watched a church parade of the garrison, followed by a ceremonial march past of the new recruits. They were local boys, and so were applauded by the relations, their girl friends and their friends. The members of the town band which headed the procession were wearing the blue uniforms with red

facings that Queen Victoria had decreed for the Order of St. Michael and St. George which was founded in Corfu, and is now also a British Order. The recruits marched as smartly as guardsmen, and their drilling was impeccable.

For us, the festivity was full of charm, for the Corfiotes have the gift of dressing-up for a ceremony, and the crowd was orderly and friendly. One of our neighbours, the doctor of the Island of Paxos, explained to us what had been happening. He told us that he was an asthmatic, and that he was on the point of retiring because of his complaint as he found the long trips over the mountains and rough ground on foot, strained his heart.

He pointed out the Byron Cricket Club, one of the two cricket clubs on the island, and he told us that they have now arranged for an annual cricket week every September when teams from Malta and from the British Navy play against the local teams on the rather rough ground of the Esplanade.

In the evening, we dined under the arcades, eating fried scampi, veal, and quantities of the delicious wild strawberries which are a speciality of Corfu.

The next morning we explored the arcaded streets of the main part of the city and we were delighted to find a couple of antique shops which stocked some excellent English Victorian furniture and silver, as well as ikons, and silver ornaments made in Janina. We were amused to see an Athenian dealer buying some obvious Britannia ware under the impression that it was Sheffield plate.

The centre of the town is lively and clean, and here one can find a wide range of restaurants, but for the most part moderately priced and with rather limited menus. Then, besides the local cafés, there were four or five *espressos* which we were pleased to find since the tiny cups of Greek coffee are not sufficient to quench our thirst.

Once again we were charmed by the good looks and courtesy of a very affable population, but we did note that, unlike the Greeks of the mainland, the Corfiote men are not afraid of expressing their admiration of a pretty woman quite openly.

There are not many obvious sights, but plenty of attractive architectural features waiting to be discovered by the casual wanderer. The Church of St. Spiridon for instance, is noteworthy, not only because it contains the shrine of the saint

and his remains in a beautiful silver coffin, but also because of its slender Venetian tower.

In a nearby square we paused to admire the pilastered façade of the Ionian Bank, another classical feature for which the British were responsible, and in the bright sunshine, this Nash-inspired building had a far greater radiance than it would have had in London. The sun indeed is necessary to bring into relief the wrought iron, and the stone balustrades, the Venetian carvings, the piled-up masses of oranges, tomatoes and golden lemons. Here you will not find the singing and lively gaiety of Naples, but a pleasing kindly cheerfulness and the discreet courteousness which is peculiar to the Greeks.

A bus plies from the Esplanade every half hour to the battery known as the Canone. After a few minutes run along the shore, it turns inland and passes the densely wooded park of Mon Repos, the former country residence of the High Commissioners, and now the Summer Palace of the Greek Royal family. In the spring and in the early summer the gardens are overrun with roses, and the fields are full of flowers such as wild irises, orchids, vetch, big yellow daisies.

At the Canone, a café, a restaurant, and a tourist pavilion overlook one of the loveliest bays in the Mediterranean. A causeway for pedestrians has been constructed through the still blue waters to the woods of the southern shore. Further on still, the roof of the Achilleion rises out of a dense belt of trees which crowns the summit of a hill.

Nearer by, a shorter causeway leads to a small white monastery standing on a tiny islet. On Mouse Island, three hundred yards further out to sea, black cypresses surround a small Byzantine chapel, and form a sombre background to some little white houses. The legend is that this island was the ship that brought Ulysses to Ithaca, and that it was turned into stone by the angry Poseidon.

To the right, on the shores of Lake Kilikiopoulo near the mouth of the brook Kressida, Ulysses is supposed to have been cast ashore and to have met Nausicaa.

On the other hand, Samuel Butler was responsible for the theory that Ulysses was in fact washed ashore at the foot of Mount Erice near the westernmost point of Sicily.

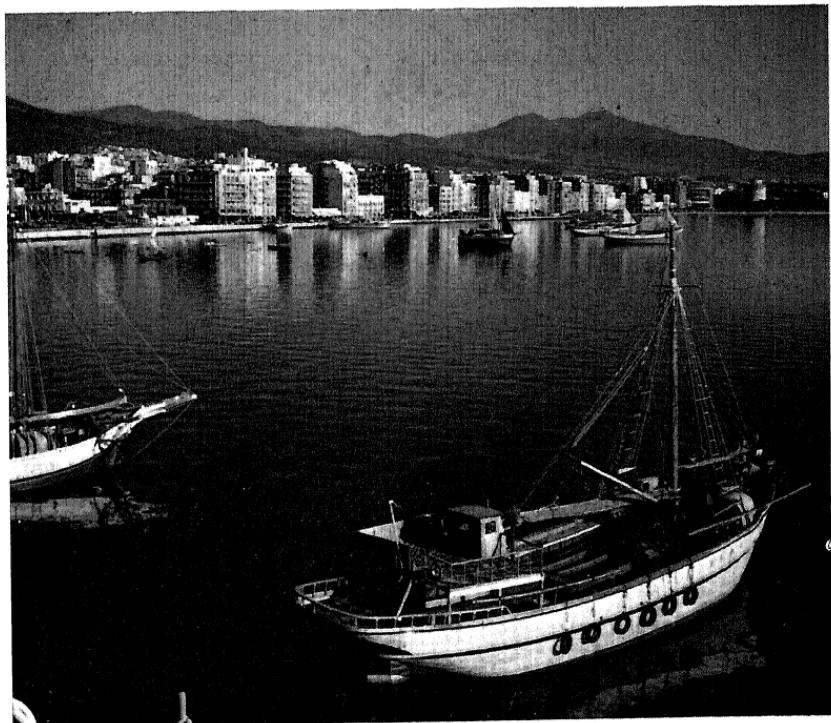
Since incidents of the Homeric Cycle are associated with every corner of Greece and Magna Graecia, we must wait for

the authenticity of such legends to be proved by archaeological research. As we have seen, Schliemann verified the Siege of Troy, Sir Arthur Evans unearthed the Palace of Minos, and the newly discovered Milazzese Civilization of the Aeolian Islands might conceivably reveal much of what has until now been veiled in mystery.

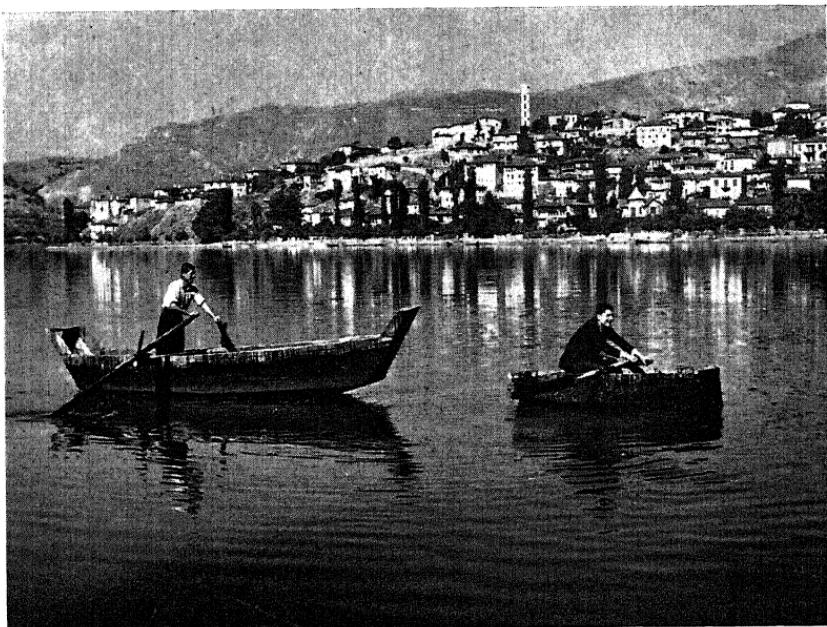
In the Achilleion, the Kaiser showed no such reticences. The Palace is wonderfully situated on the top of the hill so that from every window there are prospects. On one side it is the Straits and the mountains of Epirus, on the other, the wooded countryside of the south of the island. The mansion is terraced on every side, but the plants, the flowers and the trees are ill-matched, the statuary is in bad taste, though, even so, it is hard to anticipate the horrors of the interior: murals depicting scenes of mythology and Homeric lore painted in crude colours, and drawn in the academic style. Ill-composed wrought iron ornamentation disfigures monumental staircases, bathrooms are tiled in sage-green, blue, and even, in one or two places, the mock Orientalism in which the nineteenth-century Germans delighted. It seems that some twentieth-century tourists like the Achilleion, for it is a place of devout pilgrimage for many of the Teutonic tourists who come to Corfu in the summertime. All that can be said of the people responsible for the decorations is that they knew what they wanted, that they were assuredly satisfied with the results achieved, and that they were not afraid of being ornate.

If the town of Corfu is full of charm and interest, the scenery of the countryside is varied and singularly beautiful throughout the island. Living is inexpensive, for in at least three fishing villages there are simple and very unpretentious little inns on the water's edge which are suitable for a holiday in the warm weather. In the winter, it is a different matter, for though the thermometer seldom, if ever, falls below 45 degrees Fahrenheit, heavy rainfalls and sudden changes of temperature are frequent. Therefore, from the middle of November to the end of March, it is better to stay in an hotel with central heating and a comfortable-sitting room. The alternative is to rent a furnished flat or villa in the off-season, and this is easily done because the Greeks come here principally in the three summer months. Good and inexpensive service is available, the fish,

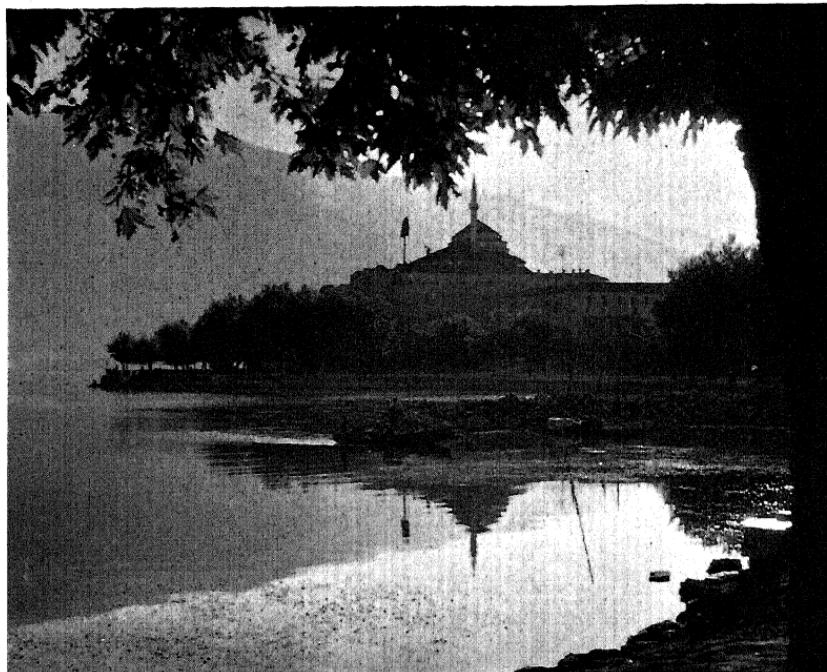
Paros Monastery



The port of Salónica



The lakeside town of Kastoria



Turkish influence at Janina

fruit and vegetables are excellent in quality but no cheaper than in Britain in the towns, though very reasonably priced in the country.

Away from Corfu, the problem of transport seems to be insuperable, but such is not the case. Buses ply every day to the capital from the outlying places, leaving, admittedly, very early in the morning and starting back as a rule at three or four o'clock in the afternoon, allowing for five or six hours shopping and entertainment in the city.

The real difficulty is to visit the country villages by public transport, for the buses either remain overnight at their destination, or they turn round almost at once to return to town.

Among the places that we liked particularly are Benitses (also spelt Benizze), Hypsos (Hypso), and Paleokastritsa.

Benitses, only three or four miles to the south of the Achilleion, consists of a long street of straggling houses situated between a sandy beach and groves of orange trees stretched out at the foot of wooded hills. The coast of Epirus, four or five miles away across the straits, is easily discernible, and in the background, the tiers of blue mountains culminate in peaks, snow-clad throughout the greater part of the year.

In course of time, doubtless, modern hotels will be built here, but in the meantime, the Avra, category D, is a simple and clean little inn, standing on the edge of a sandy beach, and with bedrooms and a terrace overlooking the sea. It is indeed very simple, but the landlord speaks a little English and is very obliging, the villagers are friendly and so are the local gentry. We have to confess that we have never tried the bathing here, but the local oranges are among the best and largest that we have ever tasted. Since the Avra has no sitting-room, it is not really suitable for a long stay in the winter or at any time. The walks through the surrounding country are lovely, in particular the climb up to the 1,800 ft.-high Aghii Deka, from the summit of which there are commanding views of the whole of the south of the island. When the sea is calm, it is pleasant to take the motor caïque which plies daily to Corfu, but I would not care to do it in rough weather, for the passengers are countryfolk who are very bad sailors indeed.

Now this south-eastern coast, with its orange groves, its vineyards and its olives has an Arcadian charm which is in strong contrast to the more rugged scenery of the north-west—the full

north-west is almost inaccessible by car since there are no proper roads, or to be precise there were none when these lines were being written.

On the other hand, Paleokastritsa, two-thirds of the way up from Corfu, can be reached by an excellent highway which was built by the British troops, ostensibly to link up the capital with a convalescent camp, but in actual fact for the benefit of the High Commissioner, Sir Frederick Adam, who liked to take his Corfiote friends out for picnics. Incidentally he may have been responsible for introducing this word to Greece, for snack bars all over the country are now called PICKNICKS.

The road is still in excellent condition, and eight miles out of town the troops who toiled to make it carved an inscription on the rock to register the fact that it was the work of the men of the Eleventh Regiment of Foot.

In May, this part of the country was full of wild flowers, and the projecting porches of the colour-washed cottages were covered with pink or crimson roses. The peasants that we passed were clean and well dressed, and they seemed to be cheerful enough though we were told that they were very poor.

The Greeks of the mainland accuse the Corfiotes of idleness, and declare that with such fertile soil and such an equable climate, it should be easy for them to make a good living out of the land. Certainly the fruit and vegetables are superb, whilst the olive oil is supposed to be the best in the world—indeed it is so good that it is drinkable and can serve as an excellent substitute for butter. Certainly the peasants here appeared to have a higher standard of living than those of the mainland, and many of them had bicycles, a sure index of improving economic conditions in a poor country.

According to Private Wheeler, Corfu was a land of plenty in the first quarter of the nineteenth century—wine, fruit and poultry were abundant, and the countryfolk joined in all the celebrations and festivals of the capital which were organized by the British in close collaboration with the local dignitaries. No one seems to have regretted the death of Sir Thomas Maitland: “The soldiers drank a glass to the memory of ‘King Tom’, got as drunk as lords and went to bed as happy as princes.” The Greeks got up a mock funeral, and sauntered about in their best clothes intent on showing a certain respect for the dead man, but obviously relieved at his demise.

The advent of Sir Frederick Adam was a source of great rejoicings locally for he was popular with the troops in spite of a rather uncertain temper, and he had married a Greek wife who had been divorced by her previous husband whom the new High Commissioner had been "measuring for an enormous pair of horns". Apart from his successes in the realm of love, Sir Frederick was evidently a man of great discernment, for the wooded Bay of Paleokastritsa has as much magical beauty as Portofino or the Marina Grande at Capri but here there has been less commercialization and there are fewer people even in the height of summer, partly because of the remoteness of the place and partly because of the wisdom of the Tourist Board of Corfu.

The directors of this organization have decided to spread out the hotels that they have built and will build so as to prevent overcrowding. On a small beach such as this one the accommodation is to be limited to thirty-five beds or even less. At the present moment the admirable little "tourist pavilion" has ten rooms, and the adjoining *pension* is certainly no larger.

To the north and to the south, other hotels are to be constructed on similar sites, but spaced out at reasonable intervals.

The Corfiotes believe that if they cater to individuals rather than to parties and large groups, they will be able to preserve the amenities of their island and at the same time build up a very solid clientele. Certainly it would be easy to spoil Paleokastritsa for here the trees cover the densely wooded slopes right down to the edge of the beach of fine white sand. On the tall headland of the northern arm there is an historic Byzantine monastery which dominates this part of the coast. The chapel contains some fine ikons, but the attraction of this religious house lies more in the picturesqueness of the site than in the architectural worth of the buildings.

One of the monks pointed out to us a terrace built high up the slopes of a mountain side for Kaiser William who used to come here to picnic on fine days. Now the King and Queen of Greece are frequent visitors to the bay, stopping sometimes for a meal at the pavilion, for they do not stand on ceremony and mingle very freely with their subjects.

This part of the coast is noted for its lobsters, and so we

rowed out to a kind of reservoir made of nets and were given a really splendid specimen, which was cooked for us by the chef of the restaurant on the Plateia. He charged us only three shillings for this service, and gave us besides a large bowl of mayonnaise and some salad.

On our return journey we drove across the island, leaving the main road and threading our way by tracks through lush woodland and passing by hamlets of colour-washed houses with gardens full of flowers. Most of these cottages had roofs that projected in front to form a kind of terrace where the women sewed or wove in the shade, and watched the children playing at their side.

Finally, through the trees, we saw the towers of a very Tuscan-looking castle, built, so we were told, by an Italian admiral in the nineteenth century. It is the exact and perfect replica of a large medieval villa in the Casentino, so perfect, in fact, that we found it difficult to carp at this excellent piece of bogus.

The owners, members of an old patrician family of Corfu, have transformed this place very successfully into a first-class hotel for it is furnished with genuine antiques of the period, and they have installed central heating, running water, and a suitable number of bathrooms.

The service was of the kind that you would have found fifty years ago in a large country house in the Shires, and the proprietors do their best to maintain the standards that prevailed when their parents were alive. Until very recently no member of the Corfiote aristocracy could have gone into business without losing caste, but times have changed, and in any case, this enterprise has been made respectable by the patronage of the King and Queen and their children who sometimes stay here, and come quite frequently to join in the dancing during the summer season.

The Castello Mimbelli at Dassia, as this hotel is called, is not over-expensive considering the luxury of the bedrooms and reception rooms, and the lovely park that surrounds it. A small bus takes guests down to the sea and into the city, and the countryside is ideal for walking since there are good paths through the woods and cars seldom use the tracks down to the beach and to the mountains. We have decided that we shall certainly spend a few days at the castle when we come back to

Corfu, as we assuredly will, for we liked the easy atmosphere, the sylvan surroundings and the magnificent views of sea and mountain.

By way of contrast, we drove down to Ipsos, rather less than two miles away through the woods, and right on the water's edge. This is a small village straggling on the landward side of a road which runs along a beach of sand and faces the mountains of southern Albania. A charming place, for here the houses are surrounded by woods, the vegetation is exceptionally luxuriant, even for Corfu, and there are no disfiguring petrol pumps or roadhouses. Simple, clean accommodation is to be found at the Costas or the Mega, two very unpretentious little inns, the first of which is owned by two young men who speak quite fluent English. Communications with the city are relatively good, for a number of buses pass through this place on their way to the villages of the north.

There are frequent opportunities of going to town by motor caique, though there is no wharf or anchorage here. In the woods, a few hundred yards to the south of Ipsos, we noted the camp of the Club Méditerranée, a French organization that caters for the young and would-be-young of every nation at very reasonable rates. Since the boys and girls are cheerful and well-mannered they do add to the attraction of this region by their liveliness, but they have their own beach, their own bar, and their own dance floor.

Our driver was characteristic of the general upheaval which has wrought such changes in modern Greece. Born in Crete, he had spent a great part of his life in Macedonia as representative of General Motors. Now, as the result of the war, he had settled in Corfu having come there first of all in the train of the British forces as an interpreter. He spoke English very fluently but with a charming Irish accent for he had worked for two years as an engineer in Cork. Now he was in the car-hire business and gradually regaining his lost prosperity, but he still had a long way to go for the reconstruction of Greece has been slow owing to the civil war which broke out after the cessation of general hostilities. As lately as 1953, there was only one battered car on the island, and none of the roads was really fit for use, for they had been wrecked by the Germans. As it is, many years must pass before all the secondary roads of Greece and the islands will have been brought up-to-date, but most of the

principal highways will be completed by the end of 1961, and others are in the course of construction.

As far as Corfu is concerned, the roads in the south and in the centre are excellent, but those of the north have been neglected until now because the north is a military zone which can only be entered with a special permit, but this permit is obtainable from the tourist police who grant it readily enough to bona-fide tourists. The reason for these restrictions is the proximity of the north to Albania, and the desire of the Greek Government to prevent the passage of Communists between the two countries. Anyone who has the slightest knowledge of the activities of the Reds during the civil war will readily understand why these regulations have been imposed. The atrocities committed by the Left Wing troops can scarcely have a parallel elsewhere; not only did they torture their opponents but they slaughtered women and children, and kidnapped no less than 29,000 children from the northern provinces, though it is fair to say that the latter were returned to their parents some years later through the intervention of the International Red Cross.

After having a very pleasant interview with the tourist police, we decided to visit the village of Kassiopi which is in the extreme north, but on this occasion we used public transport and stayed in a cottage in order to see how cheap a holiday on limited means could be.

Country-bound buses for the north start from the square near the Customs House, and most of them are timed to depart at three o'clock. To our great relief the driver was punctual, for the sun beat down mercilessly on our vehicle which was full but not overloaded, though most of the passengers were peasants who brought with them all sorts of bulky parcels but no animals.

To our surprise, there was no shrine to St. Christopher on the roof above the driving wheel, and not even the traditional peacock's feather to placate the pagan gods and ward off danger. Then, to reassure us still more, there were no signs of the ominous paper bags which are provided for the carsick, and so we decided that to allow three hours and a quarter for a journey of twenty-five miles was a piece of unwarranted pessimism. We were soon to discover our mistake. The Corfu peasants being relatively well-fed, have stronger stomachs than their counter-

parts on the mainland, and our driver was presumably a Roman Catholic who wore his medal of St. Christopher on his watch-chain.

For over a quarter of an hour we waited in the heat, refusing to buy the sweets, the sunflower seeds and the cachou nuts proffered to us by the courteous and not over-persistent small boys. When at last we started, the bus rolled easily along a splendid surface back to Ipsos, continuing by a coast road with lovely views over the Straits to the village of Pyrgi where we were delayed for half an hour by the police on entering the restricted area.

When we started off again, the bus suddenly swerved to the left on to one of the roughest, rockiest tracks ever encountered. Our vehicle twisted and turned up steep slopes, negotiating large lumps of granite and taking the sharpest bends imaginable. At times it seemed as if the back of the bus was definitely projecting over the side of a precipice, but not one of our fellow passengers even stopped talking. They said that the trip was far worse in winter, especially after nightfall and in wet weather.

After a while we became accustomed to the routine, for we soon realized that the chauffeur knew his job, and we were entranced by the beauty of the landscape. Sometimes after a climb, we could look down to the depths of a rocky bay or a beach of yellow sand with a lace-like fringe of foam. At others, the mountains of Albania appeared to be looming ever higher and nearer to us.

The villages, at intervals of three or four miles, consisted of colour-washed houses with gardens lavishly filled with rose bushes. Here, as elsewhere, the women sat on their doorsteps sewing, weaving or scraping vegetables, whilst waiting for the passage of the bus which is evidently the great event of the day. Somewhere at Nissakion a steep rocky path leads up to the monastery on the summit of Pantokrator, the highest peak on the island and 3,000 ft. above the level of the sea. A hard climb, but from this eminence there is a prospect of the snowpeaks of Epirus, of Albania and of far-off Macedonia. On a clear day the coast of Puglia is clearly discernible, for Corfu is in a sense a kind of half-way house between Greece and Italy, with much of the charm peculiar to both countries.

At Couloura we would have dearly liked to stop, for looking

down from the bus stop two or three hundred feet up the side of the hill, we could see an enchanting circular bay lined with tall black cypresses, and enclosing in its southern arm a tiny harbour that sheltered a number of gaily painted schooners. Viewed from the sea later on, this place seemed even more attractive, for next to the row of white fishermen's cottages, there is a largish grey country house right on the water's edge, for Couloura was at one time a nest of pirates who preyed on the shipping that passed through the Straits. Unfortunately there is no accommodation to be had at Couloura, and there is only a bus a day each way, so we kept our seats and jogged on to Kassiopi, our destination. Since this village faces north and has two good beaches it is a resort for people of very modest means from the city of Corfu. There is no hotel and no inn, but the enterprising landlord of a *taverna* keeps a register of sixty or seventy cottages where bedrooms can be rented. In his own establishment he serves very simple meals, local wine and Greek coffee.

On our arrival at the bus terminus in front of the village fountain we set off in search of this gentleman who does not speak English or French but has a working knowledge of Italian, and he immediately found us a very simple, but clean, little room in a bungalow for which we paid ten shillings for the two of us, including a diminutive cup of Greek coffee in the morning.

Our landlord and landlady spoke a local dialect which we found rather difficult to understand, but gradually we established a medium of communications.

The sights of Kassiopi are rather limited—the ruins of a Byzantine castle crown the hill that divides the two bays, a grass-grown Roman theatre is half hidden behind the small square, and there is a tranquil little harbour where two or three caiques are anchored. The beaches looked very alluring but the evening was too chill for us to bathe.

Here, as in most Greek villages, the population was very friendly, and in particular the young women in flowered summer frocks. It would seem that here was a village where there appeared to be complete equality of the sexes, though admittedly the *taverna* was kept as a preserve for the men.

Since we had come out of season, the fare was simple: roast fish that looked like small mullet with fried potatoes, salad and

an orange, washed down by a fairly strong local wine which is tawny-coloured and rather like the wine of Syracuse. We drank this stuff as an aperitif, for the *ouzo* sold in the country is sometimes rather rough, and no one here appeared to be consuming it.

At nightfall, the villagers went to bed, for electricity and running water have not yet been laid on, but they will be available next year, and the rough, over-rough, track will have been smoothed out into a good road, though I am not sure that I do not prefer things as they are. At present the journey by bus is an amusing adventure, and the alternative method of transport, the *caïque*, is pleasant enough. Kassiopi should remain as a reserve for the individualist who is prepared to put up with a certain amount of inconvenience in order to have a really inexpensive holiday and mingle with the people of the country. Now that there are second-class couchettes, the fare from London or Paris to Trieste, Brindisi or Ancona is relatively small, and the journey can be continued as a deck passenger if the weather is fine and warm.

In the summer months there is dancing out of doors at the *taverna*, but at all times the villagers are ready to make friends with visitors. The problem, of course, is the language, and it is really necessary to acquire a smattering of modern Greek, and then after that to attune one's ears to the pronunciation of the local dialect. A certain number of the men over thirty-five learned a little Italian during the Second World War, but as far as we could tell no one spoke French or English.

The return to the city by *caïque* necessitated a very early rise, but our landlord woke us at half past five with a tiny cup of Greek coffee, and a *café* on the quayside provided us with a larger and fairly palatable cup of coffee made with some kind of powder together with a crust of bread, and we were very glad to have it. In the remoter regions of this country, the *café complet* with rolls and butter is un procurable, for few Greeks have breakfast, and even in Athens coffee as we know it is only served in places patronized by foreigners.

Our *caïque* was about the size of a small trawler and it was decked over so as to provide a cabin for the passengers. It was also equipped with a clean but rather primitive lavatory. Though the sea was perfectly smooth, two or three peasants went below and closed their eyes but fortunately they were not

actually sick. Apart from this, we were perfectly comfortable, for a rug was spread out on the hatch for us to sit on.

After purring along for about a quarter of an hour we rounded a point which is only two miles away from the Albanian coast and as we were some way out to sea we must have been considerably nearer for we could clearly discern the houses on the opposite shore. Since the end of the Second World War, all contacts between Greece and Albania have ceased, though previously the inhabitants of Kassiopi used to buy a great many of their provisions from their neighbours across the Straits.

The skipper told us that some fishermen of Kassiopi had been blown across to the far shore, and were interned by the Albanians. When they returned three years later, they were as thin as skeletons and declared that they were so badly fed that they had been obliged to eat snakes, lizards, and snails in order to survive. As far as he knew, no Albanians had come over from the other side. On the other hand, it is only fair to say that the numerous Albanian communities that settled in Greece during the Turkish régime are very loyal to the country of their adoption, and are quite popular with the Greeks.

The trip to Corfu took precisely two hours and we enjoyed every minute of it. By half past six, the sun was clear of the mountains of Albania, and the sea and land were flooded with a golden radiance. The silky surface of the water was an opaque blue, the vegetation on the island shore was vivid green. From time to time, as we passed small sandy beaches, we saw rocky little bays lined with fishermen's cottages, and then suddenly, owing to the curve of the island, we looked across to the citadel of Corfu that rose up in front of us, growing larger every minute. On drawing in, we saw that all the ships of the harbour were gay with flags and bunting, for a French squadron had just arrived on a visit, and the arrival of the sailors transformed the atmosphere of the city. The week before when a United States cruiser had called, the Plateia had echoed with the shouts of the Americans playing baseball. The taverns sold more beer in two days than they had in the previous six months. Naval policemen armed with truncheons paraded the streets and enforced good behaviour, but indeed we did not note a single misdemeanour on the part of the Yanks.

Within half an hour of landing, the French sailors had

created an atmosphere of their own, for they immediately ordered wine and sat at café tables engaged in ardent conversation. More than half of them visited the museums and principal monuments of the town, and many of them hired bicycles in order to go for excursions into the countryside.

As for ourselves, apart from casual acquaintances, and the courteous and helpful staff of the Corfu Tourist Office, we met two or three old friends, and were introduced to two most interesting ladies. The first of them is helping to organize the foreign tours of a troop of local folk dancers, and the second, a member of the Capodistria family, was kind enough to show us her country house. This villa was built in the eighteenth century on the crest of a hill about five miles outside the city, and the surrounding slopes have been laid out as a garden and planted with semi-tropical blossoming trees and with flowers imported from England. Most of the furniture was Georgian or Regency, but our hostess complained that much of the china had been broken, or stolen during the war.

A few years ago she went to London to see whether she could replace the missing pieces, and so she called at the Wedgwood offices to explain her predicament. The reply was that if she could give the exact date of the original order the pattern of her set might be traced. Rather sadly she admitted that the china had been bought in September 1819, and so, quite obviously, this solution would be impossible. The salesman asked to be excused for a few minutes, and then came back to inform his client that the firm had kept a copy of the original order, so there would be no difficulty in replacing the missing pieces.

CHAPTER TEN

THE ENCHANTING ISLAND OF RHODES

MY FIRST visit to Rhodes many years ago left me with a lasting impression of beauty, colour and flowers that I have treasured ever since. At that time the island was still occupied by the Italians, and it was used as a summer resort by British officials stationed in Egypt or Palestine as well as by wealthy Indians.

In the last few years, the town of Rhodes has become a fashionable tourist centre that may well rival the Sorrento peninsula and Majorca in popularity.

Fortunately the island is forty-five miles long and twelve miles wide at its widest point, and the greater part of it has yet to be developed so that vast tracts of coast are still unspoilt and are likely to remain so for some time to come. As for the capital, nothing can really harm it, for the Knights Town has been carefully restored and preserved, and the small but very entertaining Turkish quarter has not changed much since 1932.

Apart from the monuments of antiquity, the small but beautiful Byzantine churches, and the astonishing medieval city, the chief attractions are the climate, the varied scenery, and the abundance of trees and flowers. In the winter, the minimum temperature is 50 degrees Fahrenheit, and in the summer, the thermometer seldom registers more than 80 degrees, whilst it is claimed that even in the month of January the average temperature of the sea is usually round about 65 degrees. Certainly I have seen people bathing in late December on days when it was warm enough to wear a tropical suit in comfort.

One cannot really decide whether it is better to come here by ship or by plane. Approaching from the sea, there is a vision of massive grey ramparts and the battlements of the castle rising out of a belt of sombre green trees. Further to the right, the white arcades of the market are faithfully reflected in the still jade waters of the harbour where the coastal schooners anchor. Then beyond, on the headland that juts out to the east, the colour-washed villas of the suburbs are smothered

with flowering creepers whose purple or crimson blooms blaze throughout the year.

The background is of green hills and tree-clad mountains, whilst across the straits, the peaks and ranges of Anatolia rise up in gradations of pastel blue and grey.

Arriving by plane, the impression is totally different. The journey from the airport of Hellenikon takes only just over an hour and forty minutes, though it is possible that this time will be cut down, but in any case there are several services a day throughout the summer season. Anyway, why should anyone resent the leisurely flight across a sea full of islands of strange and varied outlines?

From time to time, as we flew, we could look down on small harbours ringed round with semi-circles of white houses, facing still small ships at anchor. The detail of the hills was scarcely discernible, but we yearned to be wandering through terraced vineyards and orchards, or just simply clambering up barren slopes in search of some deserted temple or Byzantine sanctuary. There are so many of these islands of Greece that years must pass before they can be fully explored and discovered by eager tourists, and still more time must elapse before they can all of them be developed.

As we soared high up in the sky baked by the same sun that melted down the wings of Icarus, our minds could not fail to dwell on the timelessness of the gleaming blue water below us, waters on which ships have sailed since the first dawning of civilization. How perilous and slow these early journeys must have been, and how courageous the men who ventured forth to unknown lands with such ineffective means of navigation. The story of the *Odyssey* may be legendary, but assuredly it is based on fact, even though the wanderings of Ulysses were embroidered and amplified to satisfy audiences hungry for tales of adventure. Clearly the Phoenicians and the Greek traders of a later age had far better craft and far greater knowledge than the Homeric heroes, for how else could they have reached the shores of Britain, and perhaps even the Canary Islands?

Soon we were approaching Rhodes with its green slopes patched by dark woodland, standing out against the background of roseate rock made by the mountains of Asia Minor. We were filled with awe, for we remembered the splendour of the landscape and of the beauty of the flowers, the castles of the

Knights and of the Crusaders built next to the marble temples of the Greeks and the dark, frescoed little Byzantine churches. Then below the surface of this ageless land are found vestiges of a still older civilization which flourished fourteen centuries before the birth of Christ and was akin to the Minoan civilization of Crete of the same age.

The island was one of the principal trading centres of the Eastern Mediterranean, and the inhabitants enjoyed great prosperity. Their ships sailed to all parts of the Inland Sea, and the Rhodians had colonies on the coast of Spain, the Aeolian Islands, and perhaps even on the mainland of Italy, France, and in parts of the Black Sea.

Their presiding deity was the Sun God Helios who had been at first forgotten when the earth was being divided up by Zeus and the Immortals of Olympus. Later on he came to claim his portion, but he was told that there was nowhere left for him to occupy. Helios replied that from high up in the Heavens he had seen a beautiful island in the depths of the Sea, and that if it were raised up and given to him he would be fully satisfied.

Later he married Rhodos, the nymph of the Island, and their three sons founded the cities of Lindos, Ialysos and Kamiros. Helios was supplanted by Apollo, though eventually the two gods appear to have been merged into one in the minds of the people.

The rivalry between the three towns was settled after the Peloponnesian War when they agreed to found the city of Rhodes on the northern extremity of the island.

The new capital flourished commercially, and was described by Strabo as being surpassed in grandeur by no other city and hardly equalled by any. Its political institutions, its school of oratory enjoyed world-wide renown. Its strength was such that it endured a siege of one year by Demetrius Poliorcetes, the military dictator of Athens. The attackers used every kind of stratagem in order to break down the massive walls. They hurled stones of enormous weight from floating batteries, and on land, they constructed an immense wooden tower 150ft. high which required 2,500 men to set it in motion. This formidable machine was assisted in its operations by two battering rams, 150ft long, and manœuvred by 1,000 men.

By the end of the year 304 B.C. the attackers were forced to

give up the struggle and withdraw. To celebrate their victory, the Rhodians commissioned the sculptor Chares to make an immense statue of the Sun God which became known as the Colossus of Rhodes, and was listed as one of the seven wonders of the world. This monument took twelve years to erect, for it was made of bronze and over 105ft. in height. It stood near the harbour, but it seems unlikely that it was placed there as a gateway to the port astride the two pierheads. It was overthrown by an earthquake fifty-six years after its erection, lying in the sea until A.D. 653 when some Saracen corsairs broke it up and sold the fragments to Syrian merchants. It is said that over 900 camels were required to move it from the coast to Edessa.

A century or so before the birth of Christ, Rhodes became a province of Rome, but it still remained a centre of arts and letters, for Cicero, Julius Caesar, Augustus and Tiberius came here in turn to study philosophy, oratory and elocution.

When the Empire broke up, the island passed under the rule of Byzantium, although it was occupied for a while in the seventh century by the Saracens.

In 1082, the Venetians were granted the protectorate of Rhodes, but sixty years later they were supplanted by the Genoese, who eventually offered it to the Order of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem.

The latter entered Rhodes in 1308, and immediately began to fortify the city so that it became almost impregnable, for they repulsed attack after attack by the Moslems of Egypt. The Knights did a brisk trade in piracy upon passing vessels, and they made slave raids in the neighbouring provinces of Asia Minor so that they were never short of labour for their galleys or for their monumental buildings.

They were divided into nine groups; Provence, France, Auvergne, Italy, England, Germany, Spain, Castile and Aragon, each of which had its own commander and was responsible for the defence of a strip of the town wall.

The Hospice of each "tongue" can still be seen in the "Street of the Knights" which lies in the eastern part of the city.

In 1480 their courage was put to the test when Mohammed II despatched a large army and a fleet of 160 ships to drive them out of the island. After repeated attacks, the Turks were driven off with heavy losses, but a few years later the population was greatly reduced by a disastrous epidemic of plague.

In 1522 the Turks returned, this time with an army of 100,000 men and over 400 ships. The depleted garrison resisted gallantly, for over 30,000 of the besiegers were killed in the course of six months. Finally the bastion held by the "English Tongue" was blown up by a mine, and the situation became desperate, especially when three more bastions were destroyed. Eventually, the Knights had to surrender, but they were allowed to sail away in their own ships, and after a period of wandering they settled in Malta, an island which they fortified even more strongly than Rhodes.

The Greek inhabitants were forced to remain and to submit to all sorts of humiliation. Most of their churches were turned into mosques, their schools were closed down, and the houses within the city were taken over by the invaders. By sundown the Christians had to leave the town, and the gates of the ramparts were closed to them until the following morning.

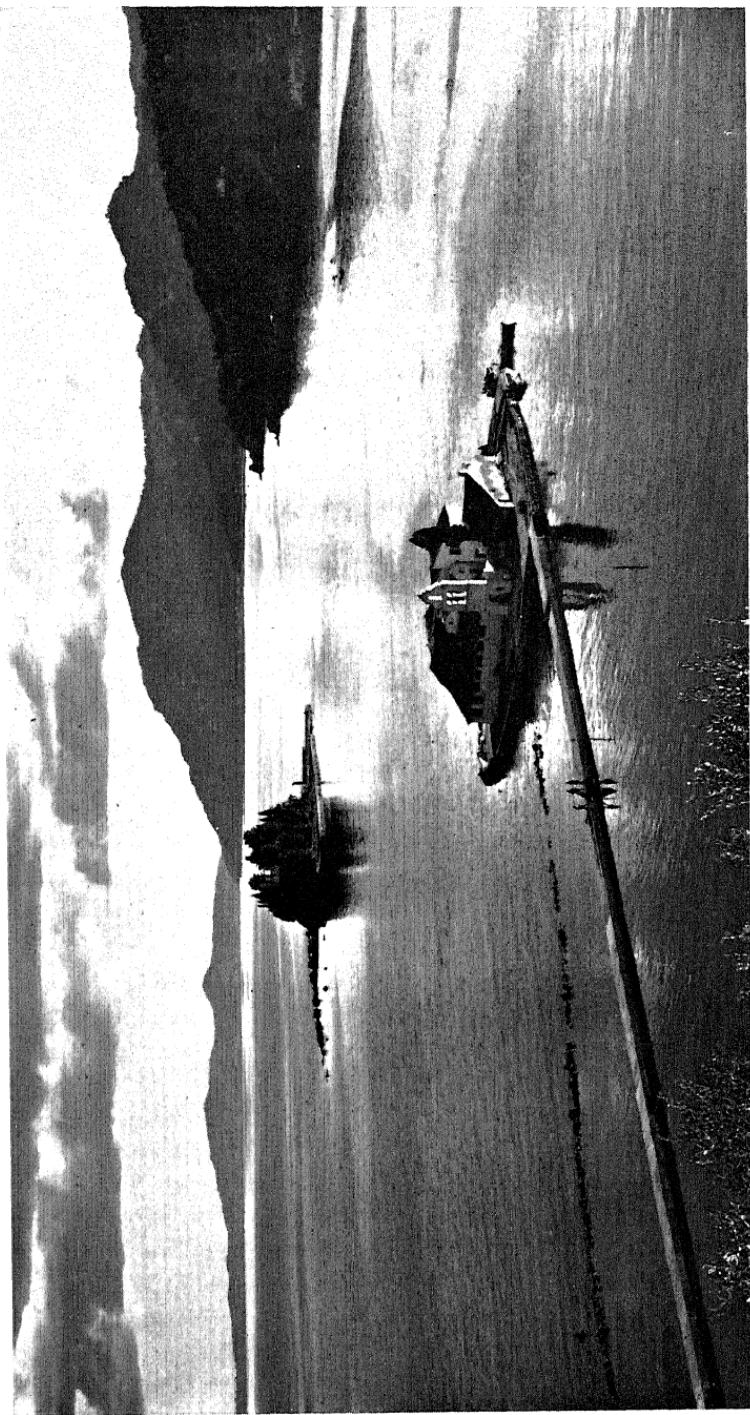
Just as in many other parts of Greece, the national spirit and culture was kept alive by the priests in the remoter parts of the countryside, but it was not until 1750 that a school was opened at Lindos, though the other islands of the Dodecanese had been granted far greater liberty by the Sultan.

In the nineteenth century other schools were founded, including a secondary school in the town of Rhodes. The War of Liberation fanned the spirit of independence, and many of the islanders escaped to the mainland in order to take part in the struggle.

In 1912 when war broke out between the Italians and the Turks, the islands of the Dodecanese were annexed by the Kingdom of Italy, though with promises of a large measure of autonomy.

For a while, the Rhodians were relatively satisfied with the new régime, but in 1922, the Fascists inaugurated a policy of Italianization which made them highly unpopular. The Greek schools were replaced by Italian schools, and Italians were forcibly settled in different parts of the island. Once again the Greek language was taught secretly by the priests, though a number of their churches were taken over by the Roman Catholics.

On the other hand, it is only fair to state that the Italians restored many of the ancient monuments and took measures for their preservation. They built a smart new suburb on the



The monastery of Panaghia Vlacherena at Canone, Corfu; there is a Byzantine chapel on "Ulysses' Island", farther in the distance



The Streets of the Knights, Rhodes

headland that lies immediately to the east of the harbour, and following their practice they laid out some good roads.

With the fall of Mussolini in 1943, Rhodes was occupied by German troops who were compelled to capitulate to Greek and British forces in 1945. In 1947, Rhodes and the other islands of the Dodecanese officially became part of the Kingdom of Greece.

In the intervening years all Italian citizens were repatriated to their own country, and many of the Turks emigrated to Anatolia, so that not more than 3,000 of them remain, and the majority are to be found in the city of Rhodes or in Lindos.

Since many visitors only have a few hours to spend on the island, we can recommend them to pass most of their time in the old town. First of all the Street of the Knights is lined on either side with the hospices of the different tongues which served as headquarters, refectories and lodgings for each military division. This quarter has kept its fourteenth-century aspect, for the hotels were built of solid stone, and have immense coats of arms carved over their porches. Through these gateways are courtyards with ancient well-heads, or even gardens resplendent with flowers.

The first of these, the Great Hospice of the Knights, has been transformed into a small but highly interesting museum, for it contains the beautiful Marine Venus, armless like the Venus of Milo, and like her also naked to the waist, with graceful draperies clinging to the lower part of her hips. In a neighbouring room, I lingered over the unusual Venus of Rhodes, a naked figure of a kneeling girl with her hands held up to her hair from which she is wringing out the sea water. The Stele of Kameiros is a bas-relief of two draped figures attributed to Phidias. Passing through a gate on the right-hand side, we discovered a delightful garden which had escaped our attention on previous visits.

Continuing up the Street of the Knights, the wanderer passes by the Hospice of the Knights of Auvergne, and the Hospices of France, Spain and Provence before reaching the castle of the Grand Master of the Order of St. John, a battlemented building much restored by the Italians. The English Inn is not in this street, but is situated at the back of the Hospice of the Knights.

Naturally the bastions on this eastward side are more

strongly fortified than the rest, for the approach from the headland was the easiest for an aggressor. Outside the Gate of St. Ambrose, gardens and shaded walks have been laid out in much the same way as around many French or German walled cities, but the ramparts here are more massive than any in Western Europe.

We spent hours exploring the Old Town, and in particular the narrow streets of the Turkish quarter which are spanned by arches, and still contain a number of mouldering old palaces adorned with crumbling coats of arms. In places there are still some Oriental fountains covered with tiles or arabesques. The small cafés serve excellent Turkish coffee, but in a leisurely manner, and quite frequently an English-speaking Rhodian will address the Anglo-Saxon visitor in his own language. In such places prices vary according to the mood of the landlord, but on more than one occasion we have been invited to have a drink on the house, for here as elsewhere in Greece the hospitality is warm and generous.

Though the wines of Rhodes are palatable enough in their modest way, the thirst-quenching *retzina* has to be imported from the mainland, and so we have found it better to stick to the excellent light Greek beer, which is best of all on draught, or labelled "for export".

The older men speak Italian, or have spoken it, though they have had no practice for many years. Others acquired a certain amount of English by working for the British forces in the post-war period. Most friendly of all are the men who served with the Greek regiments in Montgomery's Eighth Army. This force of many races became in time a separate nation to which soldiers were bound by suffering, success and a spirit of loyalty.

In Rhodes there are few "Americans", for the Italians did not encourage emigration even though they brought in a number of settlers from their own country, and the islanders who left for the States in the post-war period have not yet returned.

One of the most pleasantly situated cafés has tables set out under the trees in the square facing the romantic-looking Suleiman Mosque. There are many smarter places for a drink in the new town, but here you will be able to see something of the life of the Turkish quarter. Nearby we were greeted with great charm and courtesy by the curator of the Moslem

Library which has a charming garden. A Greek who had worked for S.O.E. (Special Operations Executive) talked to me about his war-time experiences, and a Turkish Rhodian grew nostalgic about his service with the Eighth Army. At first we felt the heat, and the air was stuffy, but soon there was a cool breeze from the sea, and at five-thirty the locals woke up from their afternoon siesta, and there was movement in the streets.

There are vestiges of a bazaar in a broadish thoroughfare leading towards the medieval Castellan near the waterfront. The articles displayed for sale were for the most part cheap Oriental junk, but here, as in the north of Greece, silver ornaments were inexpensive and sometimes attractive, and the woven wool handbags cost rather less than on the mainland. Real antiques seem to have disappeared, perhaps because the Jews of this quarter were liquidated by the Germans in 1943.

Naturally enough, we tried to find some authentic thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Rhodes plates and dishes but this beautifully coloured earthenware has become so valuable that all the best pieces have been exported to London, Paris or New York. The imitations now produced on the island have an industrial finish, the floral ornamentation is mechanically drawn and the colours are harsh.

Locally-made rugs and carpets are only moderately attractive, though they are hand-woven, because the present trend is to copy the machine-made factory products of Western Europe; but in this case again, it is sometimes possible to find genuine old carpets of the Turkish era.

Other features of the Old Town worth discovering include three Byzantine churches, the Admiralty House of the Knights, the ruins of a Gothic church, and a number of small patrician mansions.

We enjoyed going down to the waterfront, especially in the early morning or in the late afternoon when the light is at its best—from noon to four or five in the afternoon we liked to retire to the Hotel des Roses, a very modern establishment in the New Town with its own bathing beach which faces the coast of Turkey.

The villas of this quarter have not a great deal of character but they are surrounded by gardens where the roses bloom all the year round, and the semi-tropical creepers are ablaze with purple, scarlet and yellow flowers.

We have also stayed at the Miramare, a very comfortable bungalow hotel spaciously set out on the edge of a beach five miles to the west of the town, yet facing the Straits and the coast of Turkey. Following the present trend, every one of these bungalows has air-conditioning, a private bathroom, and a private terrace. Meals are taken in a central building surrounded by gardens and overlooking the sea, and there are of course a ballroom, two or three bars and other amenities of the same category.

Living in such an hotel is not particularly cheap, but since there are few temptations to spend money outside, it is certainly just the place for a restful holiday, even in the winter time, for in December the average temperature of the sea water is over 65 degrees Fahrenheit.

The surrounding countryside is attractive for walking, and the views of the mountains of Anatolia are lovely, for the colouring is always changing, and there is a constant movement of shipping through the Straits.

In this region, and in particular on the stretch of road to the Metropolis, there are a number of attractive villas, and many of these can be rented furnished for the winter, since their owners only occupy them in the summer season.

It is a tempting thought, for food here is cheap and plentiful, servants' wages are not high, and it is not difficult to find maids. Generally speaking the climate is far warmer than that of the south of Spain, and the communications with the outside world are almost as good, for by taking the B.E.A., M.E.A. or Olympic Comet flights from London it is possible to reach Rhodes easily in less than a day. To the attractions of this trip may be added a break of a day or two in Athens and Rome by arrangement with the airlines concerned.

With the exception of Corfu and Mytilene, Rhodes has greater variety of scenery and vegetation than any of the other Greek islands, though it is true so say that the landscape is Arcadian rather than classical and it is the classical setting that most of us expect to find and enjoy. There is magic in the bareness and the splendid mountain outlines of Crete. Few of us can first behold the headland of Sunion without feeling the same kind of throb that makes one tremble with excitement when falling suddenly in love. However Corfu and

Rhodes are lovely, restful and comforting, and much easier to live in because of their infinite variety, the green fields, the abundance of flowers and shady woods. In Rhodes, just as in the other islands of the Dodecanese, the Turkish minority gives an exotic touch, appreciated by visitors, and not disliked by the Greeks, perhaps because they both resented the Fascist régime.

Curiously enough, the island has frequently sheltered refugees in the course of its long history. During the latter part of the Crusades, Christians from Syria and Palestine fled here when the Saracens began to reconquer the lands that they had lost. When Cyprus was attacked by the Turks, some Greeks came to Rhodes in order to escape the Moslem domination. In the late nineteenth century, when Crete was finally liberated, the Turks from that island fled to Rhodes where they were accommodated in the village of Kremasti, built for them with funds supplied by the Government at Constantinople. The inhabitants of this little place still speak Turkish and continue to worship in the small mosque which they constructed quite near to the western coastal road.

At Embodia, a village in the vicinity, the peasants still wear their beautiful traditional costumes, costumes which survive in a modified form in different parts of the island.

Everywhere in the country, the women wear high top boots of soft yellow leather as a protection against snakes which have long ago disappeared, but the custom persists though this form of footgear is expensive.

According to one theory, deer were imported from the mainland to destroy these reptiles, but it is possible that this legend is based on some superstition of Classical times. In other parts of the Mediterranean hedgehogs or porcupines have been introduced for the same purpose and with good results.

In Dalmatia, an enterprising inhabitant of the Island of Korcula who had read the *Jungle Book*, sent for a couple of mongooses to get rid of a plague of snakes. These animals bred rapidly and soon disposed of their hereditary enemies, in fact they have become a nuisance now since they raid the chicken runs and do a considerable amount of damage.

In any case, the deer thrive in Rhodes, for the present bishop has forbidden anyone to kill them in the large tracts of woodland belonging to the Greek Orthodox Church. This forest is in the immediate vicinity of the ruins of the Acropolis of

Ialyssos from which there are lovely views of many parts of the island and of many parts of the Straits. The interest of this place is mainly in the beauty of the setting rather than in the detail of the remains, though in the midst of them there are two tiny and beautifully decorated Byzantine churches. Continuing a few miles through the woods, the visitor is enchanted to find the Valley of the Butterflies, close to the village of Kalamonas. Here, throughout the year, clouds of butterflies rise up from the ground, whilst the rippling of several little waterfalls fills the air with music.

Two miles further on, at a bend in the road to Lindos, the Seven Springs join together to form a small lake, whilst the spray of other cascades brings a welcome coolness on the hottest of summer days.

To the Greeks and to visitors from the parched Arab lands, this sylvan scenery with its wealth of fine trees, and its endless variety of flowers, is an unceasing source of enjoyment. Northerners, ever hungry for the sun and for warm beaches, are less attracted, even though two comfortable hotels exist in the dense woods that cover the summit of Mount Elias, a hill nearly 3,000 ft. high, from which there are prospects of the greater part of the island.

However, for most of us Lindos is by far the most interesting and beautiful place on the island, quite as beautiful and interesting in its own way as the city of Rhodes itself.

By the most direct route along the east coast, it is thirty-two miles from the capital, but some of the coach circuits take in the Seven Springs, Mount Elias and Kamiros on the return journey—incidentally, Kamiros, the third of the ancient cities of Rhodes, is on an astonishingly lovely site on the top of a hill near the west coast and overlooking the Straits. The remains here are more extensive than at Ialyssos, for the columns of a temple crown the summit of the Acropolis.

Lindos on the east coast has been compared quite wrongly to Dubrovnik, with which it has little or nothing in common in aspect, history or tradition. In this case, the Acropolis was built on a high headland that separates two small semi-circular bays. On the shores of the first of these is the fishing quarter of Lindos, whilst the rest of the village straggles up the hillside to the Knights' Castle and the remains of the Greek city. The second bay is traditionally held to be the place where St. Paul

landed when he came to Rhodes, but in the present day its shores are deserted.

Whilst Lindos flourished in Classical times, it fell into decay in the last years of the Roman Empire, but regained its importance when the Knights of St. John decided to turn it into a fortress and built a castle amidst the ruins of the Acropolis.

It is a steep climb up to the hilltop, the first part of it being through narrow streets of white-washed houses, some of which have been turned into souvenir shops, displaying authentic plates of Rhodesware, but selling only the modern counterfeit. Generally speaking Lindos only comes to life for an hour or two a day in the summer season when the coaches from Rhodes bring a score or two of tourists for a brief visit. The rest of the time, the eight hundred inhabitants slumber in the warm sunshine, waiting for the day when the place will be "developed" as it assuredly will be, for the winter climate is superb, and in January and February, the temperature here is much higher than in Rhodes. Certainly when we were there one December, the bathing was as good as in most parts of the Mediterranean in the month of June, though there were few people on the excellent sandy beach.

Having inspected the mellow ruins of the temple of Athena on the Acropolis and lingered among the six Dorian columns that remain, we visited the fifteenth-century church of the Knights and then proceeded to lunch on the terrace of a restaurant kept by a charming old Turk who spoke fairly fluent Italian.

The fare was of the simplest and the best of its kind: roast fish, freshly caught, and served with a sauce of olive oil and lemon, an excellent local cheese and a palatable white wine from the neighbouring vineyards. Best of all was the country bread made from wholemeal flour and stone ground, and as good as the town bread in Greece is insipid. We have made a meal of it sometimes with the strong garlic sauce which is the counterpart of the *aioli* of Provence, but this has the same consistency as bread sauce.

As we sat, we could watch the women carrying pitchers or petrol tins to the fountain. One or two Phoenician-looking dogs scratched themselves on the dusty road, and a patient man waited with his donkey in the hopes that a prosperous tourist would want to be transported up to the castle.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

A VISIT TO CRETE

A TRIP to Crete is still considered to be an adventure by a large proportion of the foreign visitors to Greece, although this island is really very accessible and its amenities are rapidly being improved. From Piraeus there are now five sailings a week to Heraklion (Candia) and to Canaea, and the journey takes twelve hours. Both these cities can be reached by plane from Athens in just over an hour.

All the Greek tourist agencies organize inclusive tours to Crete from Athens, and some of these tours also include Rhodes in their itinerary. Air services are most efficiently organized by Olympic Airways who have the monopoly of transport by plane in Greece, but there are also package holidays by charter plane from London, and from Paris.

The C.H.A.T. and one or two other companies have day trips by air to Heraklion, allowing full time for a visit to the Palace of Knossos and the city.

Though we have visited most parts of Greece repeatedly, neither of us had been to Crete, and so we cannot claim to have expert knowledge of the island, though we can claim to have studied different aspects of Minoan civilization for many years.

Now, quite recently, articles have appeared in the Press suggesting that many of the theories propounded by Sir Arthur Evans are incorrect, and that the Minoan civilization is not nearly as old as he suggested. Previous to this it was believed that the Minoans did not speak Greek but spoke a mysterious language of their own. The latest investigations have led archaeologists to declare that the Minoans did speak Greek and that the disaster which was supposed to have destroyed the Palace of Knossos in the seventeenth century before Christ did not, in fact, occur. Lastly, it is suggested that Sir Arthur Evans restored the ruins of the Palace in a rather unscientific manner, and that his reconstructions lack authenticity.

Now all this may be perfectly true, but it is quite certain that if it had not been for Sir Arthur Evans the site of the

Palace of Knossos would not have been discovered so soon, if at all, and that thanks to him, the ruins have been made highly interesting to the ordinary layman, and the strange and exotic Minoan civilization brought to life.

Since many people, like ourselves, may feel confused by the recent pronouncements made by archaeologists, it would seem that the best course for visitors to Crete is to wait until they are actually on the island before collecting the latest data. It seems more than probable that any dates given before 1960 are debatable, but we can be certain of a number of interesting facts. Firstly that in the early stages of their civilization, the Cretans were in close contact with Egypt, and that their art was strongly influenced by this relationship. Secondly the Minoans did influence or dominate many of the Greek states of the mainland, and that for some centuries the Kings of Knossos were masters of a vast and prosperous empire. Lastly, there was a period of decadence when Crete was in all probability dominated by Mycenae.

The island was well known to the Athenians, and to the other states of Greece, and was in fact part of the Hellenistic world from the year 1,000 to the Roman invasion in the year 65 B.C. but it had no real social, political or artistic importance during this period, though some fine buildings and sculptures were produced. The other Greeks considered the Cretans to be sly, treacherous, and not over-intelligent: to quote St. Paul: "always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies."

When the Roman Empire fell, Crete was kept by Byzantium and then conquered by the Arabs in 824, and liberated in 961 by the great Byzantine general Nicephorus Phocas who arrived with an armada of 3,000 ships.

In the beginning of the thirteenth century, when Byzantium was seized by the armies of the Fourth Crusade, Crete was apportioned to the Venetians who remained in possession until the Turkish invasion of the seventeenth century. Little by little the fortresses of the island were attacked and captured, until finally Heraklion (Candia) fell in 1669 after a siege which lasted twenty-two years, during which close on 140,000 of the assailants were killed.

If resistance movements continued in the mountains, the inhabitants of accessible cities and villages had either to endure terrible persecution or be theoretically or actually converted to

the Moslem religion. During the War of Liberation, the people of Crete revolted but did not gain their independence. After repeated rebellions throughout the nineteenth century, Crete became autonomous in 1898, thanks to the intervention of the great European powers, and was united to Greece in 1913, after the Balkan War.

In 1923, when the governments of Greece and of Turkey arranged for an exchange of populations belonging to their respective races, some 30,000 Turks departed and were replaced by Greeks from Asia Minor. Nevertheless some Oriental influences remain, notably in the national costume of the men who wear top boots, very baggy black trousers, short-waisted long tunics, which are sometimes embroidered, and frequently lined with scarlet, red or blue. The caps are usually round but vary in shape according to the district. The looseness of the trousers is a heritage of the Moslem belief (or superstition) that Mahomet would be reborn of a man, and the "bag" would, if need be, catch the babe on its arrival into the world. The music is exotic, and the peasants dance to the strains of the lyre, and sing songs of their struggle for liberation, or else improvise according to the mood and circumstance of the moment.

Although Crete is only 165 miles long and thirty miles across at its broadest point, the resistance movement and guerrilla warfare continued throughout the years of German occupation during the Second World War.

The islanders fought with exceptional courage, helped by the lack of roads and the three ranges of mountains whose highest peaks are close on 8,000 ft. above the level of the sea. In the east, the Lassithi mountains; in the centre, the Psiloriti, the Mount Ida of the Ancients, is the highest summit of the island, to the west the White mountains are lower, but cover a wider expanse. All the upper slopes of these mountains are snow-covered in the winter, for here, just as on the mainland of Greece, most of the splendid forests of Classical times have disappeared.

On the other hand, since Crete is much nearer to the north coast of Africa than Greece, the climate at sea level is mild in winter, and really hot in summer, bathing is agreeable, usually as from the end of March and sometimes before.

The road from Heraklion (Candia) to Canaea (Khania) is

sound and the highway to Sitia on the eastern end of the island should be in good condition by the time this book is published, and other roads are in the course of construction.

With regard to hotels, the position in Crete is just the same as elsewhere in Greece, that is to say that modern hotels and tourist pavilions are under construction, and that many more are projected.

At Heraklion and at Canaea the hotels recommended by the reputable tourist agencies have efficient plumbing. Travelling independently, we were able to have rooms with private bathrooms in category B hotels. As for restaurants, our experience was that the two or three best places in these towns were clean, served good local wine, but had very restricted menus. Public transport was much the same as in the rest of Greece, that is to say good, except in the rush hours and on public holidays.

As usual, the half hour's wait at the airfield of Hellenikon seemed interminable, but it was perhaps a shade less interminable than it would have been as for instance in Manchester, Frankfort or Zürich because we could amuse ourselves by studying exotic types, and the contrasting bromides. The latter, unfortunately, were in this case compatriots. There was a North Countryman who watched us drinking *ouzo*, and told me that if we drank three more glasses I should go blind—needless to say we ordered three more to his great consternation. Then there was a couple hailing, probably, from a cosy part of Devonshire who were terrified lest they should come into contact with other British tourists, and doubtless hoped that they would pass for Greeks. Whenever a departure was announced they rushed out, and rather foolishly, we saved them from going in turn to Kalamata, Rhodes and Salonica. Each time we were thanked with a wan smile for they were bound, they told us, for Kriti. This word, it turned out, was the extent of their knowledge of Greek, so they used it incessantly.

Our flight was just like any other flight for there was little to be seen once the Gulf of Athens was left behind. From high up we looked down for a few brief seconds on the Island of Milos, but from this tantalizing angle it appeared to be just like any other island except that it has practically no trees.

Though it was here that the Venus of Milo was found, and there are ruins of a theatre, and of an Acropolis, it seems that this island has little or nothing to induce the ordinary visitor to call here. There are many other islands with bigger, better and more interesting ruins, more attractive scenery, and villages with more character.

Soon afterwards we saw the bronze-coloured mountains of Crete against the horizon, and our plane began circling over the outskirts of Heraklion, in this case, monotonous rows of cubic white houses, disposed more or less casually. The airfield was forlorn, and the small reception buildings were devoid of the metallic slickness characteristic of most airports. Nevertheless there is a magic quality about the Cretan landscape that grips the heart and leaves a kind of nostalgia to return in spite of the waste spaces, the absence of trees, and the occasional rather sharp practices that one has had to endure. It is quite true that the Cretans are hospitable and generous, courageous and hardy, but like many rather unpractical people they are apt to be tough customers in business. Nearly 3,000 years ago, the Greeks of the mainland used to laugh at the squeaky high-pitched voices of the islanders, and it is astonishing to find that after a dozen invasions, occupations and colonizations, their accents are still as odd as ever even to the ear of foreigners like ourselves. Then, stranger still, the men, and some of the women, have the slender waists and slim figures that are depicted in the frescoes of the Palace of Knossos, and, in particular, of the bull fighters who were Athenians if the Legend of Theseus is to be believed.

After the usual period of waiting we jogged off in the airline bus towards Heraklion. It was about five o'clock in the afternoon, and the sun was already turning the bronze of the mountain slopes to old gold, patched here and there with indigo wherever there was a dip in the ground. The blue of the sea was fading to deep violet, the trifling, silly little white houses of the suburbs assumed a certain dignity in the light of the early evening. Suddenly the bus crossed a wide square and plunged into the city, leaving on either side bastions of the Venetian ramparts that still encircle the city, in spite of the battering of twenty-two years by the Turks. To the right there was a glimpse of the harbour, to the left a fuller vision of a broad square with the fountain built by the Venetian Governor

Morosini in the centre. In Heraklion, there are many café terraces, occupied throughout the day by men who follow the Eastern custom, and toy with their own beads, or beads thoughtfully provided by the management. The most relaxed require a chair on either side of their arms, and two chairs in front of them for their feet. A diminutive cup of coffee entitles them to this luxury for several hours, as well as to endless glasses of ice-cold water. Nevertheless there is an impression that Crete is in a state of transition—in Heraklion, strenuous efforts have been made to wipe out visible relics of the Turkish past, and so, many picturesque houses have been pulled down and replaced by rather uninteresting-looking structures, and most of the palaces of the Venetians have suffered a similar fate. An English author, writing in 1890, declared that Heraklion presented the ordinary aspect of a Turkish town with mosques and minarets, wooden houses with projecting top floors and windows covered with gratings. All the women were veiled, "for here, as in one or two other towns in Turkey, the Christian women have adopted Moslem costume. At the city gates, crowds of lepers importune the foreign visitor, for they are relegated to a village just outside the ramparts."

On landing, the writer was annoyed to find that all his books (including a copy of Bradshaw) were confiscated by the police as dangerous literature. The inns were filthier than anything that he had seen in Turkey. . . .

It is easy to criticize the Cretans for destroying so many traces of the past, but for them the past meant squalor, oppression, torture and exactions. Even the remote government of the Venetians was resented, for the latter recruited galley slaves by methods which were, to say the least of it, far from squeamish, and there were constant revolts against their rule, quite frequently by colonists of their own race.

Finally the hostilities of the Second World War and the subsequent occupation certainly retarded the march of progress after so many centuries of exploitation by foreign troops of occupation.

In the centre of Heraklion two or three streets have kept more or less the aspect of an Eastern bazaar, and in the main streets, three or four shops sell the lovely woven work, carvings and metal work still produced by local craftsmen. Of the taverns, one near the harbour is pleasantly situated, and

another, the Kalithea, on the ramparts, is just beyond the public gardens at the eastern extremity of the city. Here we found a charming terrace overgrown with honeysuckle, and overlooking the suburbs and the hills beyond them. The other customers were all of them Cretans of the professional class, and we were glad to see a number of reasonably dressed women—in the provinces the tendency is for men to leave their wives at home, and the atmosphere in cafés and taverns is far from lively.

Though the choice of dishes was limited, we spent a pleasant evening, dallying over our dinner, and drinking *minos*, a local white wine of high alcoholic content, that was not quite dry enough for the Anglo-Saxon palate. For the most part the other guests ordered the really excellent Greek beer which is usually preferable to rather rough country vintages. We were also entertained by the Cretan folk music which came through discreetly on a loudspeaker, though it seemed to be rather repetitive like most compositions of this kind.

Visitors to Heraklion will be pleased to discover that nothing is easier than to visit the Palace of Knossos, for it is just over three miles out of the city. The local taxi-drivers are apt to take a highly optimistic view of the prices that can be charged, but there is no need to employ them for there is a half-hourly service of buses from the centre of the city. Incidentally, those who have read Leonard Cottrell's *Bull of Minos*, and have a good handbook, do not need a guide to show them round, but it is probable that the guide will have the latest information about recent discoveries, and recent conclusions about Minoan civilization.

Inspired by Schliemann's astonishing exploits in Troy and Mycenae, the young Arthur Evans set out early in the twentieth century to find the ruins of the Palace of Minos. Until then it had been considered a legendary place that figured only in Greek folklore. With perseverance, a lavish use of time and money, he succeeded beyond all his expectations, for the ruins of an immense palace were gradually laid bare, and restored wherever possible by a team of architects, archeologists and painters. Still more important, the existence of an astonishing, sophisticated and enduring civilization was revealed to the world, and treasures of inestimable artistic worth were found. It is possible that Sir Arthur Evans may have juggled with his

discoveries in order to prove theories that he believed to be true, but he should, all the same, be given the credit for his immense achievement. As it is, a road guide published by the Greek Automobile Club refers to him as the "American" archaeologist Evans. . . . Such ignorance about a man who did so much for Greece is inconceivable, particularly in a publication by an official organization, but in any case honours of all kinds were showered on Sir Arthur Evans in most other countries.

However, what astonished people most when the Palace of Knossos was found, was to discover that there was some basis of truth in the legend of Theseus and the Minotaur. The Palace was so immense that it could have seemed like a labyrinth to an unsophisticated visitor from the mainland, and it is conceivable that an Athenian, Daedalus did design some parts of it. From the frescoes, and from objects found, strangely enough at Mycenae, it was manifest that the Minoans loved bull fighting and young acrobats of both sexes took part in it for the benefit of the spectators. However, there is no proof that these youths and girls were the Athenians sent as a tribute to King Minos, but there is no indication to the contrary except that the figures have the narrow waists and slimness characteristic of the Cretans.

Disappointingly enough, nothing tangible was learned about Daedalus except for the dancing place ascribed to him in a late version of the *Iliad*. Perhaps, as some authorities suggest, Daedalus was only a generic name like A. N. Other in sporting fixtures, but it would be more interesting to be told that he really existed.

How romantic was his legendary flight to Sicily on the wings that he fashioned and how sad was the fall and death of his son Icarus who soared high up into the blue Mediterranean skies.

In the words of Pierre Desportes, a poet much admired by Queen Elizabeth I:

*"Il mourut poursuivant une haute advanture
Le ciel fut Son désir, la mer sa sépulture
Est il plus beau dessein, ou plus riche tombeau?"*

He died seeking high adventure
He desired the heavens, but the sea was his sepulchre
Could there be finer ambition, or nobler tomb?"

It was Daedalus also who made the wooden cow in which the lustful queen concealed herself in order to mate with the bull who fathered the Minotaur, the monster whose desires called for the tribute of youths and maidens from Athens. Perhaps his true ancestor came from Ancient Egypt where some manifestations of Osiris are presented in human form with the head of a bull.

Now it may be really tedious for people with a slight knowledge of history and of archaeology to visit some of the ruins of the past in Greece, especially if the more attractive surface features have disappeared, but this is not the case with Knossos, partly because of the wonderful country setting, and largely because of the reconstructions and restorations made under the supervision of Sir Arthur Evans. There is, for instance, the Toreador Fresco, depicting an immense bull charging down on a young acrobat who grasps his horns with the obvious intention of taking a flying somersault over his back, where a colleague is already in full flight, with a girl standing behind the animal waiting to catch him as he lands. Then, loveliest of all, is the mural of the Priest-King, and the astonishing throne room with the walls around the throne painted with a delightful pattern of flowers, plants and animals. The "ladies watching a public function" are lively and full of movement, and they are dressed in a very modern fashion, save that their breasts are completely bare.

We found that we could wander round from hall to hall for two or three hours without growing weary, and that one visit is far from being sufficient, but this applies also to the Museum of Antiquities in the town where many of the finest objects discovered at Knossos are exhibited. Here are to be seen Minoan jewellery, heads of bulls, statues of animals, brightly coloured pottery, and the giant *pithoi*, huge jars of wonderful design used for storing oil and other comestibles.

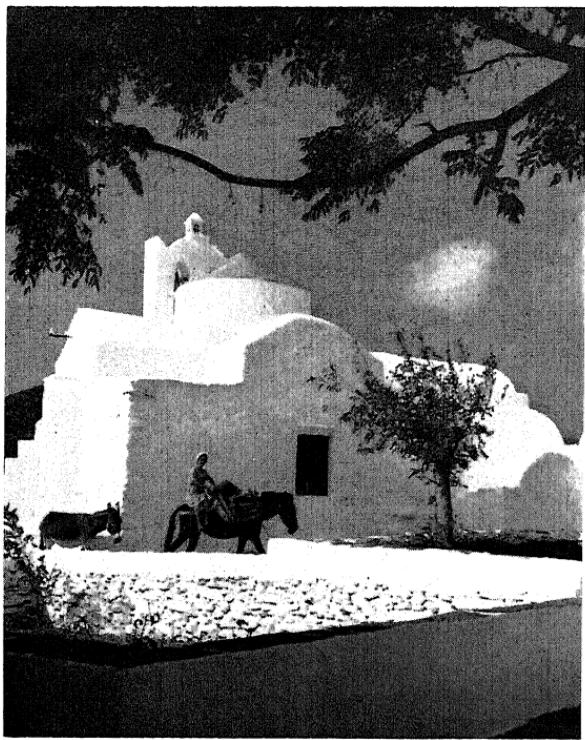
Blithely accepting the offer of a car from the local Tourist Information Centre we drove off to Mallia, only to find that on our return we were expected to pay very amply for what we had imagined to be a normal courtesy to visiting journalists. We did not resent having to pay, since we normally expect to have such expenses, but we did feel that we could have obtained better terms without the intervention of a semblance of hospitality. However the trip along the coast was lovely, mainly



(*Above*) Musicians on the
island of Crete



(*Right*) Detail of the June
Mosaic, island of Delos



The church of the
Virgin of Kata-
vati, island of Sif-
nos



The church of Paraportiani, island of Mykonos

because of the wonderful golden light that enveloped the landscape of bare, bronze-coloured hills and flashing sea. Architecturally the villages were negligible but the country people that we passed possessed a quiet dignity which was enhanced by their graceful bearing.

The Palace of Mallia is in a beautiful pastoral setting, and it was built during the first period of Minoan civilization, but the ruins are little more than lines of stone in the surface of the earth, and have in themselves no aesthetic appeal—indeed this place could only be of real interest to someone deeply versed in the archaeology of Crete, and the same, I should say, is the case with the ruins of Gournia and of Phaestos, though the latter are in really lovely scenery, and provide an excuse for crossing to the south side of the island. At Phaestos incidentally, there is a tourist pavilion, and there is another one for that matter on the edge of a wonderful beach five or six miles beyond Mallia. Here the rooms are simple but clean, and tables are set out in the shade on a terrace overlooking the bay which has no human habitation for several miles on either side. The water is clear and warm, the sand unsullied. The wine was good, the menu very restricted, and here as so often in the provinces the staple dish was some kind of rissole served invariably with fried potatoes, quite good but not very cheap considering the size of the portions and the simplicity of the fare, for this was all that was offered to us.

However, despite these comments, we did feel that we would gladly return to this lovely spot, but never in any circumstances at a time of the year when the weather might be cold or wet, for there was nowhere to sit indoors, and for that matter nothing to sit on except rather uncomfortable chairs. Without a car, communications with the outside world are limited to infrequent services of buses to Heraklion and to Sitia near the eastern extremity of the island.

To be fair, we shall be the first to regret the arcadian simplicity that prevails in the country places at present. If some charges seem high, it is just as well to note that the cost of food here is great, that the tourist season is short, and that in a country that has had to adjust currency repeatedly, there is no real standard of prices. We left Crete, fully intending to return, if possible for a long stay, and preferably in the country, and in a region where we would have an opportunity of meeting

the local inhabitants, though the difficulty of the dialect would undoubtedly present some obstacle to close relationships. Cretan is not only pronounced differently from the Greek of the mainland but many of the words and locutions have no resemblance whatsoever, and are completely unrecognizable, and just as in Sardinia and Sicily the dialects vary considerably from one locality to another.

Canea, the administrative capital of Crete, has little of archaeological interest to offer the visitor, and the traces of the past are rapidly being obliterated. However it has the reputation of being more lively than Heraklion, partly because of a more accessible and animated water front, and partly because it is a local capital, and some restaurants and cafés cater to the officials both visiting and resident.

APPENDIX

THE OTHER ISLANDS

THE IONIAN ISLANDS. The seven Ionian Islands are strung along the west coast of Greece, and the northernmost, Corfu, has already been fully described in this book.

Next to it comes Paxo (*Paxos*), Santa Maura (*Lefkas*) which is practically a peninsula of the mainland, Cephalonia, Ithaca, Zante, and last of all Cythera (*Cerigo*).

Paxo (Paxos) is only five miles long and two miles wide. It is noted mainly because of its scenery, and because of the large marine caverns on the west coast. It is accessible by caïque from Corfu.

Santa Maura (Lefkas). This mountainous island is joined to the mainland by a spit of sandbanks and mudbanks. It was fortified in turn by the Byzantines, the Venetians, the Turks and the Russians. It is of interest to archaeologists, because some experts have suggested that Lefkas was the Ithaca of the ancients, and that it was there that Ulysses ruled and lived in the palace described by Homer.

From a cliff in the extreme south of the island (Cape Ducato) the priests of Apollo used to dive into the sea from a height of 240 ft. This plunge was also performed by lovers as a penance. It was here, and in this manner, that the poetess Sappho was killed.

Lefkas is accessible by coastal steamers bound for Cephalonia and Ithaca. It can also be reached by road from Vonitza. There are few amenities in Lefkas, but it is an island which might well be developed in the near future.

Cephalonia. The largest of the Ionian archipelago, is thirty-one miles long, and twenty miles broad at its broadest point. The mountains of the centre are over 5,000 ft. above the sea level and are often covered with snow throughout the winter.

The northern part of this island runs parallel to the south of Ithaca from which it is separated by a channel four miles wide. There are extensive remains of a Mycenaean civilization which are not however as important as those of Ithaca.

Argostoli (Argostolion), the capital, suffered considerable damage from various earthquakes, but there are still many signs of the British protectorate in the first half of the nineteenth century, including a square named after Sir Charles Napier, who was a popular governor—so popular in fact that a bust of him was erected by subscription. The museum contains “finds” of the Mycenaean age from different parts of the island.

Other features of interest include the house where Byron stayed before his departure for Missolonghi, and the Castro, the ruins of the Venetian capital comprising the remains of houses, churches, a castle and ramparts. This place was abandoned by the inhabitants after a disastrous earthquake in 1757. There is an unpretentious hotel at Argostoli. Ships from Athens and Corfu call two or three times a week at Cephalonia, which can also be reached by coastal steamers, and local services from Corfu and Patras.

Ithaca. Sixteen miles long, and four miles broad (at its broadest point) consists of two “islands”, each rather mountainous, and connected by a narrow isthmus. In appearance it is rather barren, its principal interest lies in its association with Ulysses; in fact it should be visited with a copy of the *Odyssey*, since many of the features described by Homer can be identified, though it is necessary to add that other features mentioned by the poet are to be found at Cephalonia, or Lefkas. Ships of the Hellenic Steamship Line call here fairly frequently, but landing is by tender. Alternatively Ithaca can be reached by local service from Cephalonia.

Zante (Zakintos). Twenty-five miles long, and twelve miles broad, with hills rising from twelve hundred to fifteen hundred feet above the sea, Zante is one of the most fertile of the Greek islands, and the vegetation is exceptionally luxuriant for the Mediterranean. The climate is mild throughout the year. Unfortunately Zante has been devastated by earthquakes that have occurred on an average every forty years for the past few centuries.

Like the other Ionian Islands, Zante bears many traces of the centuries of Venetian occupation, and of the half-century of the British protectorate. There are seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Italian paintings in some of the churches of Zakintos, the capital, which has wide arcaded streets, and a

certain number of Venetian palaces. The inhabitants have kept up with their traditional crafts and regional music which has been influenced by contacts with the Italians in the past. Hotels are very unpretentious.

Cerigo (Kithira) (Cythera). The three names apply to the same island which is twenty miles long and twelve miles across at its broadest point. It is only eight miles from Cape Malea, the southernmost point of the mainland. There are few archaeological remains of interest save for the columns of a Doric Temple of Aphrodite, for it was here that the goddess emerged from the sea, and came to land. Cythera is fertile because of the abundance of streams. The capital, Capsali, has 1,500 inhabitants.

THE CYCLADES. This is an archipelago of some thirty islands grouped round the island of Syra (Syros) the chief town of which is capital of the *nome* or province of the Cyclades.

Most of the islands have few trees, though they produce olives, grapes, figs and other fruit. Since the archipelago was occupied for three centuries by the Venetians, a large proportion of the population is Catholic.

Syra, Mykonos, Tenos, Paros, Naxos and Santorin are the most interesting, and of these Santorin and Paros are the most beautiful. Most of them can be reached by the regular steamship services from the Piraeus, and the above-named are usually visited by cruising steamers.

The sea on these journeys is occasionally rough, but the air is clear, and the islands of the Aegean for the most part enjoy a drier climate than those of the Ionian Sea. The Cyclades have a drier climate than the islands near to the coast of Asia Minor and of Thrace.

Syra. Sixteen miles long and six miles broad this is a rather barren island with two or three pleasant beaches, which can be reached from the capital by bus. This town, also called Syra, has an attractive old quarter on the heights, the more modern quarters are built in tiers around the harbour. There are two modest hotels here.

Tenos. Eighteen miles long, eight miles broad. Has some attractive remains of the Venetian occupation at Borgo on the heights. The capital, Tenos, is also the chief port though it has less than 3,000 inhabitants. One category B hotel, and two

others besides. Here, as in most places in Greece, it is possible to rent rooms in private houses and feed at one of the *tavernas*.

Mykonos and Delos. These two islands are connected with Piraeus by daily services, the journey taking from ten to eleven hours. There are also daily services from Tenos and Syra, and four weekly services from Samos, and a boat from Rhodes once a week. In fine weather motor-boats ply to the other islands of the Cyclades Archipelago.

Mykonos has few notable antiquities, but the small capital with its dazzling white houses, Byzantine churches and wind-mills is highly picturesque and attracts a number of summer visitors. There are a few hotels (one category A) and some good beaches which can be reached by bus or motor-boat. Rooms in private houses are scrupulously clean and in some cases comfortable.

The smaller island of Delos was sacred to Apollo and to Artemis who were believed to have been born here. It is at present uninhabited, but there is a tourist pavilion near the extensive remains which are as large and as interesting as those of Delphi or Olympia. Since Delos was not only a shrine but a prosperous commercial city, there are ruins of warehouses and counting-houses, and of the shrines of Eastern gods, meaning the gods of the Egyptians and the Syrians.

The neighbouring island of Rheneia is also uninhabited.

Paros. Is noted mainly for its marble quarries. It is thirteen miles long and ten miles broad, the ground on all sides rising to a mountain 2,500 ft. high. The little capital of white houses with terraced roofs and gardens full of flowers, orange trees and pomegranates, is singularly attractive. There is now an excellent hotel in Paros, under the same management as the King's Palace Hotel of Athens.

Naxos. The largest of the Cyclades, is twenty-two miles long and sixteen miles broad. It has no notable archaeological remains, though the sculptors of Naxos were famed for their skill and talent. Naxos, the capital, was built by the Venetians, and so it has many houses of Italian architecture and it is surrounded by solid ramparts. The hotels and restaurants are on the quayside.

Santorin (Tyra). In a sense the most spectacular of the Greek Islands. Sickle-shaped it curves round a deep bay for eighteen miles—so deep is the bay that ships have to moor up

to the shore, but the cliffs rise up perpendicularly from the sea to a height of a thousand feet in places. The volcanic islets of the Kaemenes are in the centre of the bay, the entrance of which is guarded to the north-west by the Island of Therasia.

The capital, Tyra, is highly picturesque because of the dazzlingly white houses, the Catholic cathedral, and the views over the bay. The ruins of the ancient town of Thera have some analogy with those of Pompeii, for the outlines of streets and houses can be clearly discerned. Here as at Delos, there were temples dedicated to the Eastern gods for the benefit of Syrian and Egyptian visitors.

There are two category B hotels at Thera.

THE DODECANESE. These islands lie off the coast of Asia Minor, and are more or less on the same latitude as the Cyclades.

Rhodes, the southernmost and largest island, has already been fully described in this book.

Patmos. Eighteen miles long; this is a barren island, famous as the place of exile of St. John who is believed to have written the Apocalypse in a grotto which is shown to visitors. The library of the monastery contains some ancient manuscripts of great interest.

Cos (Kos). Twenty-five miles long, Cos is barren in places and fertile in the valleys. There remain several well-preserved medieval castles built by the Knights of St. John of Rhodes. There are also the ruins of the temple of Aesculapius, for there was a school of medicine on the island, and Hippocrates was the most noted of its teachers. A priest-physician, he claimed to be nineteenth in descent from Aesculapius. The works ascribed to Hippocrates are supposed to have been written in part by some of his pupils and colleagues.

Samos. Twenty-seven miles long and fourteen miles broad at its broadest point, this island lies very close to the coast of Asia Minor, and like Rhodes, it is well wooded. The winter climate is mild, so mild that Samos might one day become a winter resort. The sweet dessert wine is widely exported. Communications with Piraeus are reasonably good. Hotel accommodation is unpretentious, public transport covers the greater part of the island which is very mountainous.

Chios. Thirteen miles long and from eight to fifteen miles

across, Chios is scenically one of the most beautiful of the Greek islands. It was Turkish until 1912 and so the capital, Chios, has an old quarter of Turkish houses, as well as the ruins of a castle built by the Genoese in the twelfth century. During the War of Liberation, thousands of the islanders were massacred by the Ottoman troops, though the districts producing *mastic* were spared because the ladies of the Sultan's harem had a particular liking for this gum. *Mastic* (the spirit) is exported to most parts of Greece, and to some parts of Turkey. Chios is believed to have been the birthplace of Homer, and the "stone of Homer" is, in fact, a carving in the rock of the goddess Cybele and her two lions. In remoter parts of the island, traditional costumes are still worn by the women.

In many parts of Chios there are castles and other remains of the Genoese occupation, and there are besides some very early Byzantine churches.

Lesbos (Mytilene). The seventh largest island of the Mediterranean is forty-five miles long and thirty miles wide at its broadest point. It is separated from the coast of Asia Minor by a channel seven miles wide. It is linked to Athens by a daily air service (about an hour) and there are one or two unpretentious hotels in the capital, Mytilene.

There are some Roman and Greek remains, as well as ruins of castles built by the Genoese. Mytilene was liberated from the Turks in 1912. The scenery is beautiful, winter climate rather moist. The peaks over 4,000 ft. high are frequently snow-covered in the winter. Population, about 110,000 inhabitants. The flowers are numerous and very varied, more varied perhaps than on any other island in the Aegean.

Lemnos. Has little to interest the tourist. It has no forests, few archaeological remains, and the soil is bare and volcanic save for some valleys which are fertile. Is accessible from Athens by plane.

Samothrace. Is situated immediately to the south of Alexandria in eastern Thrace on the borders of Turkey and Greece. It is accessible only by caïque from this port, for the population does not exceed four thousand inhabitants, there is no harbour or anchorage, the sea is at times very rough, the

winter climate bleak. The mountains of the centre are over 5,000 ft. high and are covered with snow throughout the winter. Though bare and rocky, the central peak is worth climbing because of the views of the coast of Turkey, Gallipoli, Thrace, Mount Athos and the islands of Lemnos, Imbros and Thasos. The Victory of Samothrace, now in the Louvre, was discovered on this island by French archaeologists in the ancient city whose remains are as solid and extensive as those of Tiryns. Samothrace has no scenic attraction, but it may, one day, be the scene of further archaeological discoveries, for in the sixth and fifth centuries before the birth of Christ its importance as a shrine and trading centre was nearly as great as that of Delos.

Thasos. Situated only a few miles from the coast of Thrace, this island is linked with Kavalla by a daily service of steamers (two hours and a half) and also by chartered motor-boat with the village of Keramati at the mouth of the River Nestos. Perfectly circular, the highest mountain, Ipsario, is in the centre and 3,500 ft. high. It is held by some to be the most beautiful island in the Aegean: there are vast tracts of forest, full, clear streams, wonderful views of the coast and of the mountains of Thrace, as well as of Mount Athos when the air is clear. The bus services are limited by the shortness of the roads, but a highway is being built round the island.

The Acropolis and old town of Thasos are being excavated by French archaeologists. There are some good beaches. Given good hotel accommodation, Thasos would be most agreeable to visit in the spring or summer, but not in winter, for the mountains here are snow-covered and cold winds blow down from the snowfields of the Balkan highlands.

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